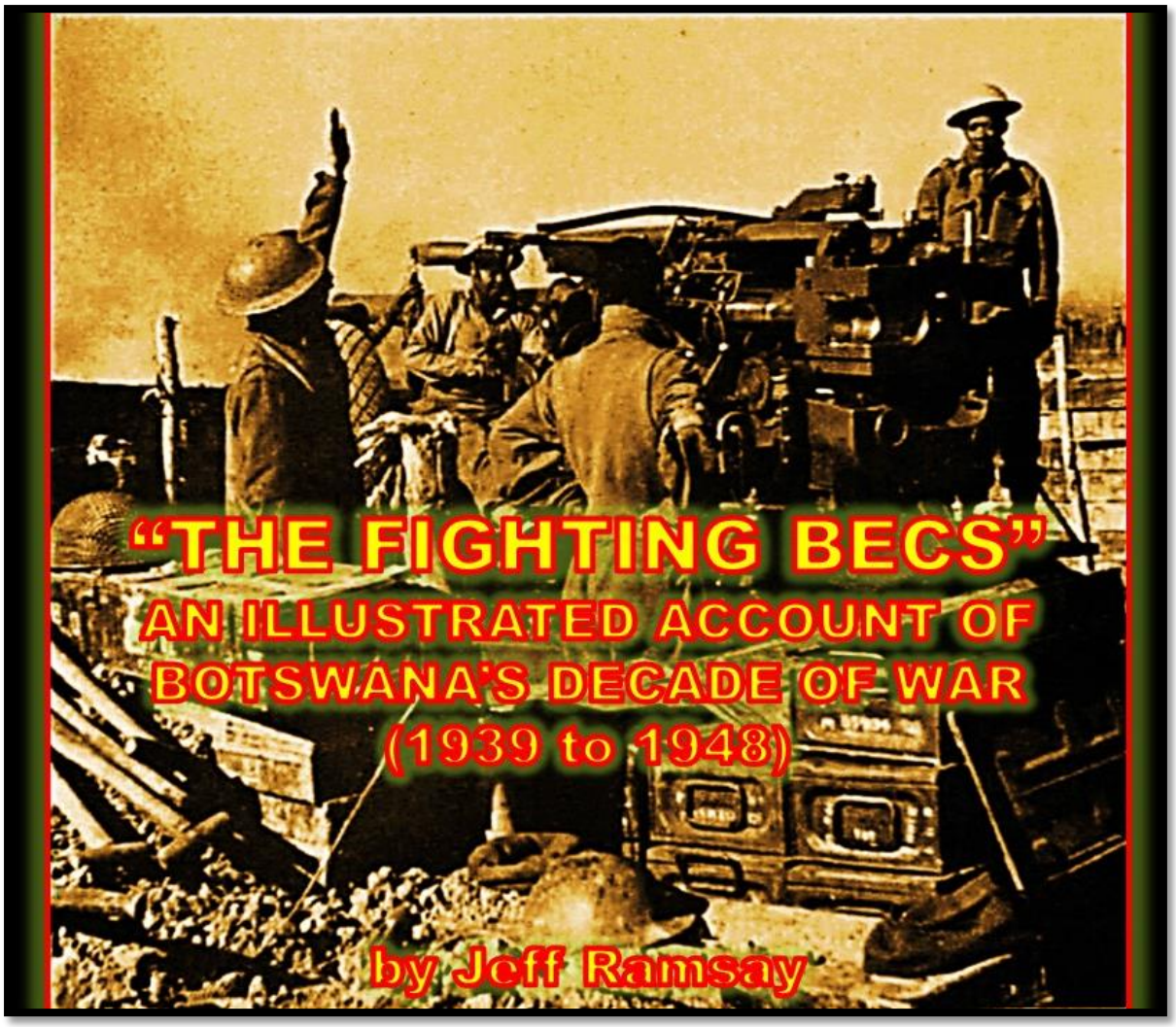


"THE FIGHTING BECS" IN BOTSWANA'S DECADE OF WAR 1939 to 1948" by Jeff Ramsay

Forward

The following monograph is adapted from a seventeen-part series of "The Struggle" that appeared in the Mmegi newspaper in 1995 to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the end of World War II. At the time this author was also assembling an exhibit at Kgosi Sechele I Museum for the occasion: "On the Frontline, Batswana Participation in the World Wars." Both the articles and exhibit were part of a wider collective initiative, spearheaded by the then-existing District Museums, working with local war veterans, to remind the nation of the extent of the Bechuanaland Protectorate's engagement in the global conflict. Variations of the original articles subsequently appeared in the Botswana Daily News (2003), Weekend Post (2015), and were condensed for inclusion in the booklet *From Boys to Men: The Story of the BDF at 30 - 1977 -2007*.

“The Fighting Becs” began as an attempt to contextualise the wealth of detail contained in Alan Bent’s 1952 semi-official account *Ten Thousand Men of Africa: The Story of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners, 1941-1946,* with a broader understanding of the war’s progression, while taking on board subsequent contributions by locally based scholars about Botswana’s engagement in the conflict (see Bibliography). Additional sources included then-emerging testimonies of war veterans, in the context of the 50th anniversary commemorations that were held in Francistown, Mochudi, Lobatse, and Molepolole, along with the findings of two then-doctoral students Ashley Jackson and Deborah Schmitt (nee Shackleton).

Nearly three decades later one can take some satisfaction that what were initially uncoordinated collective efforts by various interested parties to recall Botswana’s contributions and sacrifices as part of the British Empire’s war effort succeeded in generating popular and official interest in the Second World War’s local legacy. One tangible outcome of this awakening was Government's decision, effective in 1998, to provide pensions to surviving veterans and family members.

In addition to some modest editing the original text, the content below has been enriched with the inclusion of illustrations and maps.

Introduction [1995]

Itaya tshipi e sale khwibidu!" In light of the recent commemorations and controversy surrounding the 50th Anniversary of V-E (Victory in Europe) Day, for the next several weeks this column will examine our nation's role in the defeat of the Axis powers in World War II. Thanks to the unofficial efforts of a few, the public have been reminded of the fact that between 1941 and 1946 a total of 10,027 men served in Bechuanaland Protectorate companies of the African Pioneer Corps (APC). Given that the territory's population then numbered only about a quarter million people, this contribution represented nearly 20% of all able-bodied adult male Batswana. No part of the British Empire provided a greater proportion of fighting men.

Botswana's contribution to the war effort, however, went beyond the APC. By the end of 1943 over 21,000 additional men were in South Africa, labouring in its mines and vital war industries, while others were recruited into the Union of South Africa Defence Force’s (SAUDF) Native Military Corps. Villages across the country were thus deprived of between 45-65% of their manpower (figures which were then meticulously recorded by the late Prof. Isaac Schapera). Besides the loss of their men folk, women were forced to work on "war lands", in a largely futile effort to boost local food security. Many also became "Woman War Workers" who sent "gifts and comforts" to the troops.

Children also played a role. In some villages school children gathered weekly at Kgosing to learn about the conflict while listening to Levi Moumakwa deliver the first Setswana news and information broadcasts over B.P. Radio ZNB-Mafeking, the precursor to Radio Botswana, where they were taught such things as:

"Bombs each weigh as much as 40 bags of mealies, but when they hit the ground and burst, they do not spill like mealies! No! They spill mighty explosive that blows up factories."

Why should we now look back to *Ntwa ya Hitlera le Mosolini*? Judging from the last census, over 1,000 APC veterans are with us today. Several hundred are reported to have taken part in the 50th Anniversary VE-Day commemorations sponsored by the Supa Ngwao, Phutadikobo, and Kgosi Sechele I Museums. By looking back, we not only honouring our fathers. In the APC's skill and bravery as combatants and productivity as labourers under adverse conditions we may discover living role models.

Unfortunately, both the military and civilian achievements of Batswana during the war have been relatively neglected. Who remembers that the Bangwato HAA gunners of the 1977 Company destroyed at least half of all enemy planes shot down in the battle for Syracuse or recalls how Batswana smoke units helped secure the allied fleet at Taranto?

Elsewhere, Bakwena sappers of 1969 Company worked from dawn to dusk under enemy fire to assemble the world's largest Bailey Bridge across the Sangro River, paving the way for the liberation of northern Italy. The road that Batswana APC units helped build across the Italian mountains, "Strada di Bechuana", survives to this day.

Fifty years later it is not unreasonable to believe that the collective sacrifices and achievements of ordinary Batswana during the war were a foundation stone for Botswana's emergence a mere two decades later as an independent republic.

Not Again

When, on September 3, 1939, Britain declared war on Nazi Germany, the Bechuanaland Protectorate automatically became part of the imperial conflict. Although Batswana had no say in the matter, within days of the declaration most of the Gazetted Chiefs in the territory had forwarded letters pledging their loyalty and readiness to support the war effort.

The stance of the local dikgosi stood in immediate contrast with the divisions being played out across the border among the politically dominant white Afrikaners in the then minority-ruled Union of South Africa. Motivated in part by the fact that South Africa's participation in the First World War a quarter century earlier had led to a civil war within his community, the Union Prime Minister, J.M.B. Herzog, favoured a policy of neutrality.

Hertzog's stand resulted in his replacement by Jan Smuts, who was thereafter able to secure a narrow majority in the all-white Parliament for joining the British war effort. Afrikaner opinion, however, remained deeply divided with some anti-British extremists joining the *Ossewabrandwag*, a pro-German armed resistance movement.

Notwithstanding the dikgosi's expressions of imperial solidarity, they along with many of their subjects also harboured reservations about any active participation in the war. As with blacks, as well as Afrikaners, elsewhere in the region, Batswana opinion was influenced by still raw emotions arising from the previous World War.

Memories of the earlier conflict were brought into focus by the October 2, 1939 death in Ghanzi of the Protectorate's most prominent political detainee, the Bakwena Kgosi Sebele II. His body was returned to Molepolole, where tens of thousands, including many from outside Kweneng, attended his funeral. The extent of the public outpouring came as something of a shock to the British officials who reported that his burial was the biggest event in the Protectorate they had ever witnessed.

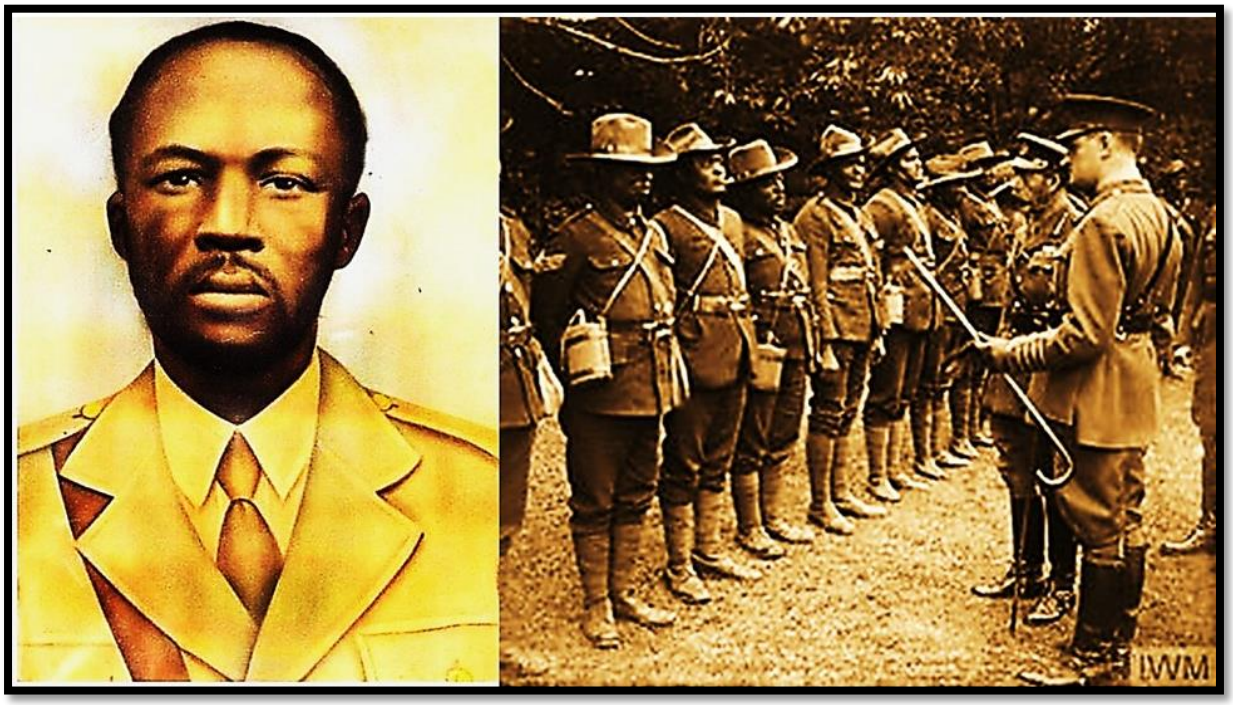
The fact that Sebele had served as a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) in France during the conflict against the Kaiser was a reminder of the ambivalence many Batswana felt towards participation in another "white man's war."

Lured to Mahikeng in June 1931 on the false pretence of attending a meeting to discuss water works, Sebele had been indefinitely detained without charge and confined to Ghanzi. As a "British Protected Person" rather than a colonial subject, he like all "Natives" in the territory was denied the basic right of habeas corpus in accordance with the Bechuanaland Protectorate Proclamation no. 15 of 1907, the notorious "Expulsion Law" whose colonial-era victims also came to include, among many others, Sekgoma Letsholathebe, John Madawu Nswazwi, Gobuamang Mosielele, and Tshekedi and Seretse Khama.

Sebele had cited his war record in ultimately futile challenges to his detention. On July 10, 1917, he had been among a handful of NCOs from the 21,000-strong South African Native Labour Contingent (SANLC) who were selected to meet

with King George V and Queen Mary, accompanied by Edward Prince of Wales and General Haig, in Abbeville France. On that occasion the King had assured the men that:

"You are also part of my great armies fighting for the liberty and freedom of my subjects of all races and creeds throughout the Empire."



Left - Corporal Sebele in 1918, Right - King George V with SANLC NCOs at Abbeville, France 1917.

Sebele became the Kgosi of the Bakwena on the very day of his return from the Western Front, which happened to coincide with the death of his father Kealeboga Sechele II. Thereafter, his stubborn rejection of his and his people's subordinate position within their own homeland led to his downfall.

Up to 800 Protectorate Batswana enlisted in the Fifth Battalion of the SANLC, of whom at least 555 served in France during 1917-18. About 1,500 also took part in the conquest and occupation of German South West Africa (Namibia), while perhaps a 1,000 had been deployed under South African command in East Africa. In this respect, negative feelings arising from the conflict went beyond the fate of Sebele. Some three million blacks from the Diaspora as well as Africa had served in various military formations during the war. While racial barriers had been a common experience among virtually all of these troops, only those under South African command had not been issued with firearms or otherwise recognised as combatants.

In France the SANLC had, in fact, been treated more like prison labourers than military volunteers. When not used as beasts of burden, its members were confined behind barbed wire. In the words of one of their white commanders: "The camps occupied by our men and the prisoners of war are identical in every respect, except as regard to the locality those occupied by prisoners are more favourably situated."

The SANLC, itself, was prematurely disbanded in 1918 as a result of South African Government concerns about growing unrest in its ranks. Up until 1986 successive Pretoria regimes ignored the veterans, denying them service medals and other forms of official recognition. In 1928 some embittered local veterans turned down a belated British offer of medals for the Batswana, Basotho and Amaswati who had served in the Fifth Battalion.

Among the Batswana in 1939 there was consensus that any active participation in a Second World War had to be different.

London Gives In

As it was, initially the British did not see the need for any local troops. Notwithstanding the rapid fall of Poland to the Germans in the first month of the war, the British and French forces were, prior to May 1940, lulled into a false sense of security behind the massive defences of the Maginot Line in France. The German's lightening advance through France in May-June 1940 thus came as a severe shock. On June 22, 1940 the French capitulated, by which time the British Expeditionary Force had been evacuated home in complete defeat.

A largely overlooked aspect of the otherwise infamous Fall of France was the massacre by some German units of captured black African troops serving in the French Army. One here must emphasize "black" given that the darker skinned troops from North Africa were, for example, separated from their lighter skinned comrades and marked for execution. At a symbolic level, the Germans further destroyed the war memorial to "Force Noire", the black troops who had fought for France in World War I. During his brief visit to conquered Paris, Hitler also personally ordered the further destruction of the monument to the French *Force Noire's* most prominent champion, General Charles Mangin.

The massacres and desecrations were a reflection of the extreme racist contempt that Hitler and his fellow Nazis felt towards the presence of any black people, much less black troops, in Europe. Before the war the Nazis had forcibly sterilised members of the small black and mixed-race community that existed in Germany itself. Subsequently most disappeared into the concentration camps alongside Jews, Romani and other ethno-racially targeted groups.

By the end of June 1940 Britain stood alone in Europe against Nazi Germany, now joined by Fascist Italy and smaller Axis allied states. Yet, in the following December a proposal by local dikgosi, led by Tshekedi Khama, to create a “Bechuanaland Protectorate Labour Corps” under imperial British rather than South African command was firmly rejected. While there were once more openings for blacks to serve as labourers within the SAUDF, London was still content to look primarily to the white and Asian populations of its Empire for combatants.

In June 1941, nearly two years after the war’s outbreak, the British reversed their policy, finally agreeing on the need for more troops from Botswana and elsewhere in Africa. In this context, they for the first time sanctioned the formation of an indigenous military force under imperial command for High Commission Territories, i.e., Basutoland (Lesotho) and Swaziland (Eswatini) as well as the Bechuanaland Protectorate. This belated call to arms was a product of growing desperation. By the middle of 1941, the Germans had driven the British out of Libya and Greece and were threatening the Suez Canal, the very lifeline of the Empire.

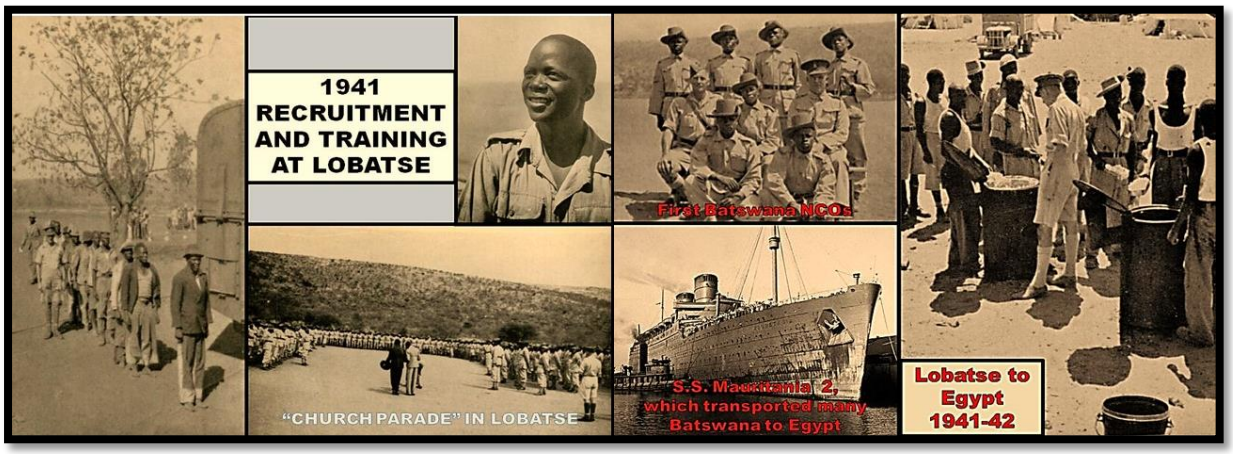
The new unit of the imperial army that Batswana, Basotho and Swazi were to be recruited into was called the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (APC). The demeaning term "Auxiliary" was later dropped, in recognition that the African Pioneers performed at the same level as those from Britain and elsewhere in the Empire.

From the beginning the Batswana response to the recruitment drive was overwhelming due to the strong support for the APC among most of the territory’s dikgosi. Underlying the dikgosi's wish to have their men in uniform was a continuing desire to contrast their people’s loyalty to the British Crown or “MmaMosadinyana” with the overt pro-Nazi sympathies of many Afrikaner/Boer nationalists. Tshekedi Khama, in particular, hoped that the creation of Batswana military units outside of the SAUDF would serve as a post-war political counterweight to South Africa’s continuing desire to incorporate the Protectorate.

In British military terminology "Pioneers" or “Sappers” were troops who carried out such functions as the building or rebuilding bridges, roads and fortifications. Yet, before the war was over, a quarter of the APC's companies were serving as gunners operating 3.7-inch Heavy Anti-Aircraft (HAA) artillery. The term "Pioneer", nonetheless, survived for the entire unit until 1946 when the APC was superseded by the short-lived High Commission Territories Corps (HCTC).

Recruitment into the APC was largely carried out by the dikgosi. In some of the Tribal Reserves a *letsholo* meeting was held to formally declare war on *Bojeremani* and *Boitali*. Mephato (age regiments) were then called upon to provide a quota of men. Although the most senior mephato were excluded, many who came forward were middle aged. Among the Bakwena the Mathubantwa regiment of the late Kgosi Sebele II, which included many veterans of the First World War, was given the task of rounding up recruits.

Lobatse to Egypt



Batswana ultimately accounted for just over 10,000 men out of the 25,000 who served in the APC, which also included troops drawn from Lesotho and Eswatini.

Officially, the APC was an all-volunteer force. But, for many the word of the kgosi was law, although a few politicized migrants back from Gauteng refused. One of these was future ANC/MK activist Ntwaesele Thatayone "Fish" Keitseng, who would later recall:

"When I was working in the mine, at Roodeport, during my second contract, people said they were going home to go fight. I said, 'what you going to fight for? Who you are fighting?' They said, 'The Chief says we must go to the war.' I said 'No. I was going home after my contract,' but I was preparing myself to refuse. On the way back, guys from Kanye were getting off the train early, like at Pitsane and Ramotswa, so they could get into Kanye quietly without the army catching them. After getting off the train we had to get on this bus owned by the chief called 'Sekalaba', which would take us to Kanye, but I was the only one left, even though many Bangwaketse started at Jo'burg with me. I was the only one going to go straight into town.

Later, they brought me to speak to Bathoen. They said, 'Here is another one Chief.' I told him, 'Ga ke ya ntweng, Mokwena.' 'Ke eng?' 'Nna, ga ke itse go

mang le go mang phalelwa e?' Then he became afraid I was going to influence these other guys, so he said, 'Okay mosimane. Ke tla go bona.' Later that day, we were standing around, and he came to join us. Then he said to me, 'Why are you asking such questions? You are influencing other people to refuse.' I said, 'No, I am not prepared to go to war. I want to know who is fighting, and for what.' I didn't know what I was supposed to be fighting for."

Others avoided service by either hiding or migrating to South Africa, where their labour was in heavy demand in the burgeoning war time industries. In many areas such dodgers became known as "*Maseapitse"*, as in those who ran from the horses of the dikgosi. Notwithstanding the resistance of some to enlistment, many others readily volunteered for kgosi and country. As one recruit, Phaledi Sesinyi, would later recall:

"People of Nswazwi were called to go to war because Batswana were call to was and there was no discrimination of where you came from because we went to fight for our country as Batswana. If people of Nswazwi hadn't gone to war the war would have come to Botswana. I went to war willingly but the man who was inspecting us said I couldn't go because one of my fingers was missing. Rasebolai Kgamane said I would be disadvantaged if I was left being, and since I was able to lift a bag full of concrete with one hand, showing that I was strong that qualified me to go to was. 150 men went to war from Nswazwi."

Another volunteer, Julius Michael Segano of Lobatse was just short of his 17th birthday when he enlisted:

"Well as a young man, you know young people are always enthusiastic, so now we saw soldiers around, marching, and we were very much impressed and we said to ourselves we would like to join. That time I was 16 years old so I was not qualified to join. However, I insisted and then my parents said, 'Well at least try to finish your Standard 6 at school.' So it was December, I recall well 1 December 1942 that I joined the army at Lobatse. I was not in any way forced like some of our tribes when the Chiefs got them to join, we are in a detribalized place so I was just attracted to join because I found it thrilling. No one joined from here was forced. A boy would like to show he's a man."

In the post-war years there would be some tension between those who did and did not go.

The Bechuanaland Drum and Bugle Band, shown here during a Victory Parade in Cairo, was also used in recruitment drives in the High Commission Territories. Sergeant Mohapeloa of Lesotho: ***Many men were spirited away by the deadly rhythm of that band and before they knew they found themselves in the army."***

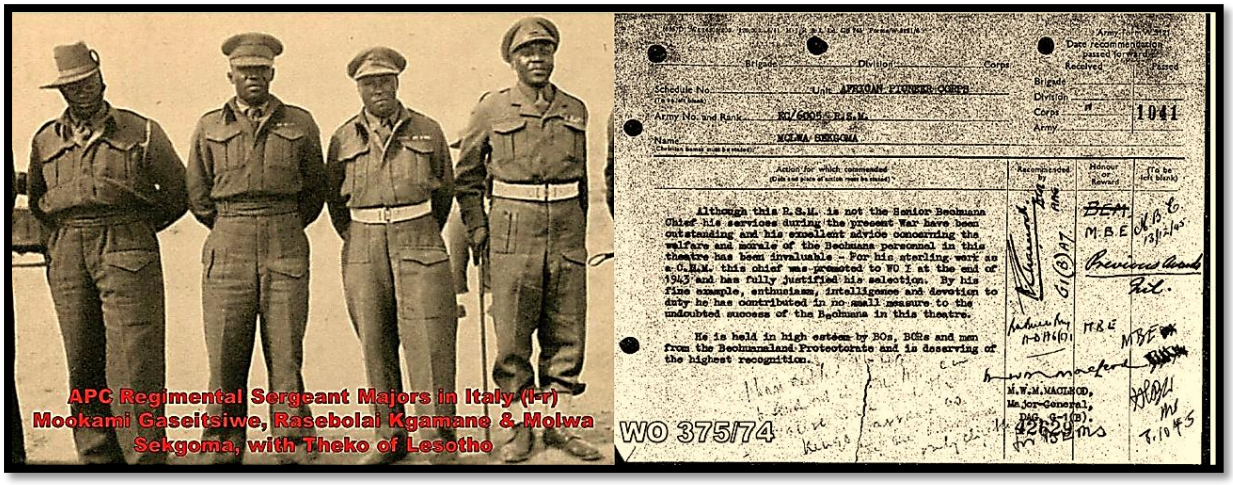
APC recruits on parade

After signing papers and swearing in before a local District Commissioner, often in their kgosi's presence, the recruits were sent to the Pioneer Corps Group Headquarters and Depot (camp) at Lobatse. There they were divided into Companies, units of about 350 men each.

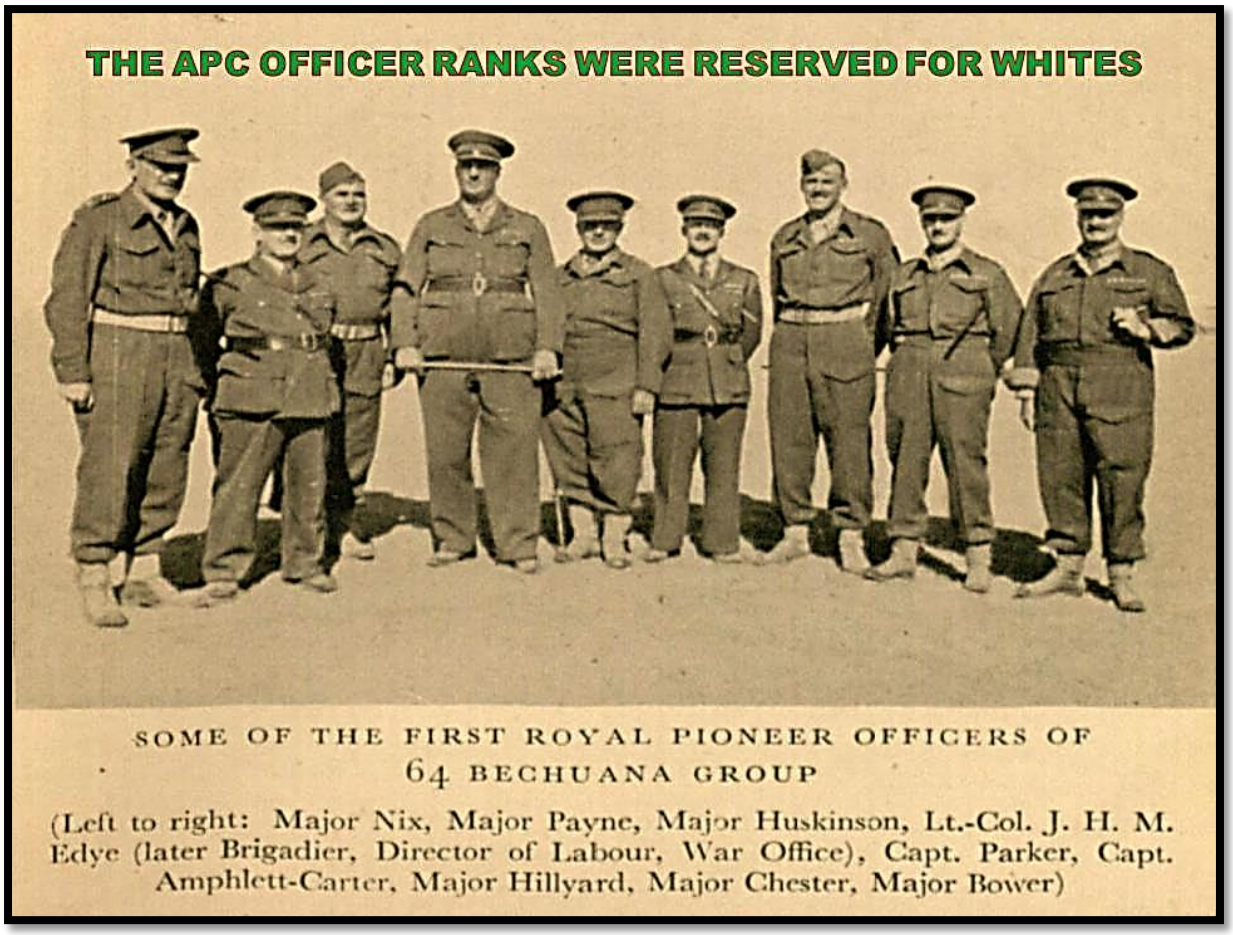
The officer corps at Lobatse H.Q. was headed by Lt. Colonel R.S. Boothby (later replaced by Lt. Colonel J.H.M. Edye), who was assisted by five additional senior officers from the Royal Pioneers Corps (UK) plus five Assistant District Commissioners, who were commissioned as lieutenants. The depot's senior Motswana NCO was Company Sergeant Major Phillip G. Matante.

Here it should be noted that throughout its existence the APC, like other African units in the British Empire, practiced a strict Colour Bar in which blacks were not eligible for promotion into the officer corps. As had been the case in the First World War they were limited to becoming NCOs, the highest rank obtainable being that of Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM). Notable among those whose advancement was thus limited was RSM Molwa Mokhutshwane Sekgoma who distinguished himself leading fellow Bangwato frontline companies into battle in Italy. His superior officers considered him worthy of further promotion as a commissioned officer, but this was disallowed. Instead for his dedication and bravery during the conflict, in 1946 King George VI bestowed upon him the Royal Honour of Member of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (MBE). This was on the personal recommendation of Major General Macleod, who had observed that:

"His services during the present war have been outstanding and his excellent advice concerning the welfare and moral of Bechuana personnel in this theatre has been invaluable...By his intelligence and devotion to duty he has contributed in no small measure to the undoubted success of the Bechuana in this theatre."


APC Regimental Sergeant Majors in Italy (l-r) Mookami Gaseitsiwe, Rasebolai Kgamane & Molwa Sekgoma, with Theko of Lesotho

WO 375/74



SOME OF THE FIRST ROYAL PIONEER OFFICERS OF 64 BECHUANA GROUP

(Left to right: Major Nix, Major Payne, Major Huskinson, Lt.-Col. J. H. M. Edye (later Brigadier, Director of Labour, War Office), Capt. Parker, Capt. Amphlett-Carter, Major Hillyard, Major Chester, Major Bower)

In the winter months of 1941 seven Companies were rapidly formed at Lobatse, which ultimately supplied all of the Batswana who went on to serve as gunners during the war. They were, as listed in accordance with their assigned numbers and tribal territories the 1971 Company (Bangwaketse) 1972 (Bangwato) 1973 (Bakwena) and 1974 (combined Bakgatla, Balete, Batlokwa) 1975 (Bangwaketse) 1976 (Bangwato) and 1977 (Bangwato).

Once in uniform the main activity for the men at Lobatse was drilling. With guns in short supply family weapons were initially pressed into service. The British officers who led the basic training soon realized that the Batswana were readily able to adapt the skills and patterns of teamwork they had in most cases acquired as migrant labourers in South Africa, as well as in their own communities, to their new role as soldiers.

In September 1941, the 2500 men of 1971-77 Companies left Lobatse for Durban. After a week's wait, they boarded ships bound for Port Suez, Egypt. Some spent a couple weeks enroute, with stopovers in Mombasa, Kenya and Aden, southern Yemen, which involved inland marches.

Others aboard the R.M.S. Mauritania (II) took only nine days to reach Suez. Launched in 1938 as the first of a new generation of luxury liners, the Mauritania had been converted into a transport vessel in 1940, in which role she ultimately carried over 340,000 troops. Even when stripped down for military service the Mauritania had a grace and, perhaps more importantly to Batswana at sea for the first time, stability all her own.

By the end of November 1941, 1971-77 companies had all arrived in Egypt. According to the former APC Major R.A.R. Bent, who's 1952 book "Ten Thousand Men of Africa" is the earliest published account of Batswana troops in the war, many Batswana initially called the local Arabs "Mangaria". This name was derived from the Arabic word "mangariya", food, which was then in short supply for the civilian population of British occupied Egypt. Beggars would thus surround His Majesty's troops in the streets asking for "mangariya".

Once landed, the Batswana companies were taken by lorry to Qasassin, a dusty town some 35 kilometres west of the Suez Canal that was the location of the main Pioneer Corps Depot for the British forces in the Middle East. There the Batswana joined some 20,000 other Pioneers drawn from throughout the Empire.

Bechuanaland Resident Commissioner Arden-Clark with Lt. Col. Chanock & unidentified Motswana NCO at APC base camp, Qasassin, Egypt
Sgt. Gabalebatse, Major Bent & Sgt. Chaa
R.S.M. Kgosi Kgari Sechele II shaking hands with High Commissioner Lord Harlech
Lance-Corporal Sukwane

In addition to the British there were men from such places Cyprus, Kenya, Malta, Mauritius, Palestine (then divided into separate Arab and Jewish units), Seychelles, Sudan, Tanganyika (Tanzania), Uganda, and Yemen. These units were able to mix freely, but international contact for most of the Batswana was limited by the language barrier. Few then spoke the imperial lingua franca, English.

The Batswana APC quickly made a good impression on the Qasassin Commander, Brigadier Picot-Moodie, who assigned them to exclusively perform critical guard duties prior to their 1943 redeployment to Italy. Upon arrival each Motswana was issued full battle kit which included fatigues (combat dress), steel

helmet, gas mask, and canteen. The two protruding ammunition poaches that one strapped across one's chest were instantly dubbed *"mabele"* (breasts).

For many troops the most prized piece of equipment was their Mannlicher Carcano 6.5 mm assault rifle. These captured Italian guns were substitutes for the modestly higher calibre British Lee Enfield Mark 3 rifle, which were then in short supply. The Lee Enfield's subsequently became the standard armament of Batswana, as well as most British and other imperial troops. For the more suspicious Batswana the provision of guns was proof that they, unlike their predecessors in the First World War, were indeed now proper soldiers.

9th Army: Syria-Lebanon and Palestine

Batswana on Sunday parade in Lebanon

The urgent motive behind the additional training became apparent in December 1941 when six of the companies, 1971-76, were dispatched to the then French League of Nations mandate territory of Syria-Lebanon, which had been occupied by other units of the British 9th Army a few months earlier in fighting against

Vichy French forces. Prior to this, the French collaborators had granted landing rights to the German Luftwaffe (Air Force), thus threatening the vital Suez Canal.

Similar considerations had also resulted in the British occupying both Iraq and Iran, then sovereign kingdoms, whose governments were alleged to have come under the control of military officers sympathetic to Nazi Germany. Then as now securing the oil from these two countries, and Saudi Arabia, was seen as strategically vital.

Notwithstanding these interventions the British position in the Middle East remained vulnerable throughout 1942. There was in particular the fear of a German invasion of Syria-Lebanon through neutral Turkey. Such a Blitzkrieg (lightening offensive) could capture the oil fields and doom the Suez, while opening the door to further German drives into Asia and Africa. If the invasion did come the Batswana would be called upon to fight, notwithstanding the APC's initial status as a logistical support unit.

In the early months of 1942, the Batswana companies were kept busy building and upgrading defences in the Bekaa valley of Lebanon. One of the biggest projects was the construction of a large fortress at Majdaloun. Others helped establish a rail link from Egypt to the Lebanese capital Beirut via Haifa (Palestine). In addition to hard work the Batswana had to adjust themselves to a winter environment of snow and icy winds.

While the first wave of Batswana was stationed in Lebanon, three companies, 1977, 1979, 1983, were posted along Suez Canal performing guard duties. A few Batswana were also detached to help guard King Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, while he was in Egypt.

Along the Suez sleep was often interrupted by Luftwaffe night-bombing. At one point there was some further excitement when the German commandos launched an unsuccessful paratrooper assault in an attempt to sabotage the canal.

Becoming Gunners

In January 1943 the veteran APC companies 1971-76 were transferred from Lebanon to the Royal Artillery Base Depot at Almaza, Egypt. There they underwent two months of intensive gunnery training before being assigned to man 3.7-inch Heavy Anti-Aircraft (HAA) batteries.

Although 3.7 HAA had proved its worth in the Battle of Britain, it was known as a notoriously difficult weapon to master. The biggest Anti-Aircraft weapon in the British arsenal, to load, aim and fire one of the massive guns required the close cooperation of a half dozen men. The calculations required to hit fast flying enemy aircraft were especially complex. Initially this task was left to experienced British gunners. But, to the surprise of many of their superior officers, Batswana soon proved capable of taking over the “No. 1” firing position.

At first many of the British had in fact openly wondered whether the "Becs" should be assigned to HAA. duties at all. Most of the Batswana had not been to school and thus had to be given a crash course in mathematics for artillery. But any initial academic shortcomings were compensated for by superior teamwork and enthusiasm.

In February 1943 the Officer in Charge of Middle East Anti-Aircraft Defences, Major-General Pollock, came to Almaza to inspect the Batswana target practice. Impressed by their rapid progress, he immediately confirmed their transfer to full combat duties.

"Then there was a new job. What was it? Training for the heavy anti-aircraft gun. We went back to Egypt where we were trained to load, sight and fire them. I was trained to demonstrate and translate to the other men. This was November-December 1942. Whilst training we went sightseeing to the pyramids. Then in early 1943, with 85 of my men I went to Benghazi in Libya to join 28 Battery, 2nd Regiment." – Robert Kgasa

"Tsholetsang Montgomeri"

"They then met Rommel's Germans in the Egyptian Sahara Desert, at the battlefield did man and son face each other, shooting bravely did Matshaba-le-Kgomo stand, and they pushed the German's Army back, hitting them as they ran!" – Alfred Mabe

In March 1943, Batswana operating both mobile and static 3.7 HAAs, became the first African gunners assigned to Montgomery's elite 8th Army. Having defeated the German General Rommel's Afrika Corps at El Alamein the previous October, the 8th Army's "Desert Rats" were then pushing steadily across the sands of the Italian colony of Libya to link up with American and Free French forces in Tunisia.

At the time Batswana pride at being part of Monty's team was manifested in songs such as "*Tsholetsang Montgomeri":*

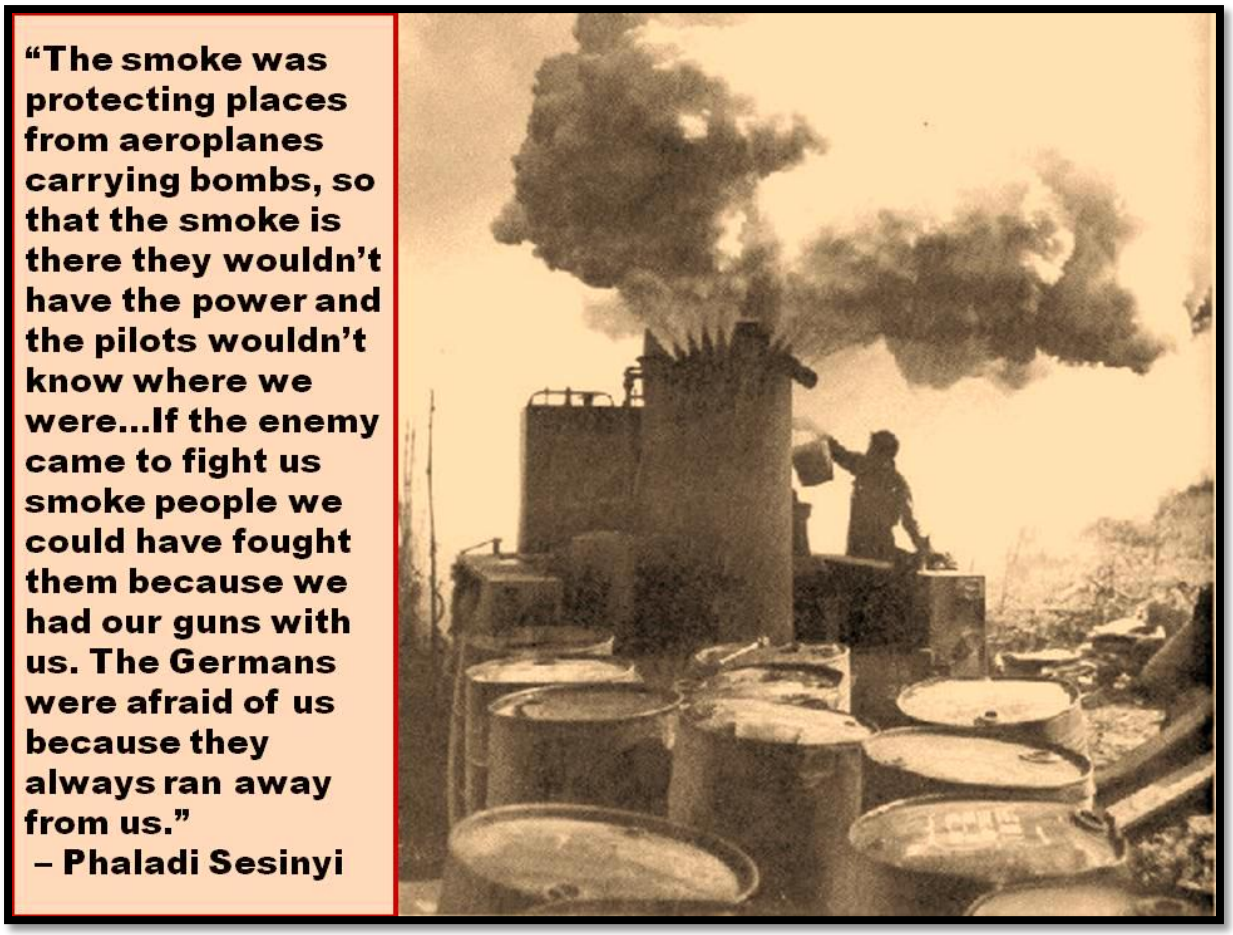
"Tsholetsang Montgomeri, Moetledi wa rona, E uta Modimo o ka thusa Moetledi Montgomeri, Phenyo ya ona ya gagwe, Huri!, Huri! Montgomeri."

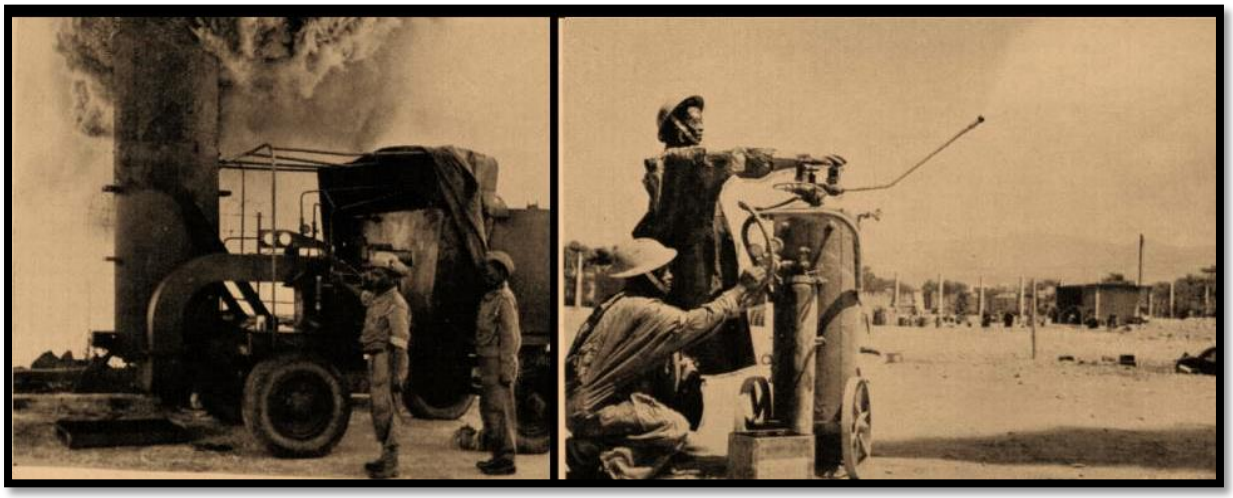
Besides Montgomery's men the allied forces in the region included the British 1st Army and American and Free French units, who collectively forced the final surrender of the Axis forces in North Africa on May 13, 1943.

It was in the context of the North African victory that in June 1943 Batswana gunners were among those honoured to receive a visit from King George VI as well as be given the frontline responsibility of providing high altitude air-cover over the Libyan capital Tripoli during the British monarch's stay.

The monarch also met other Batswana then unloading ships and manning stores in Malta, which since 1941 had been subjugated to almost daily bombardment by Axis warplanes. They were thus present when the island's residents were awarded an unprecedented collective Victoria Cross for their bravery under fire.

While some Batswana became gunners, other veteran units specialized in the use of smoke screen machines. Most of the time these "smokers" were expected to blind enemy aircraft from their potential targets. But smokescreens were also used in ground fighting to conceal attacking formations. This was an especially dangerous operation requiring units to position themselves between their own and the enemy's lines. Batswana units carried out both missions with distinction.


"The smoke was protecting places from aeroplanes carrying bombs, so that the smoke is there they wouldn't have the power and the pilots wouldn't know where we were...If the enemy came to fight us smoke people we could have fought them because we had our guns with us. The Germans were afraid of us because they always ran away from us."
– Phaladi Sesinyi



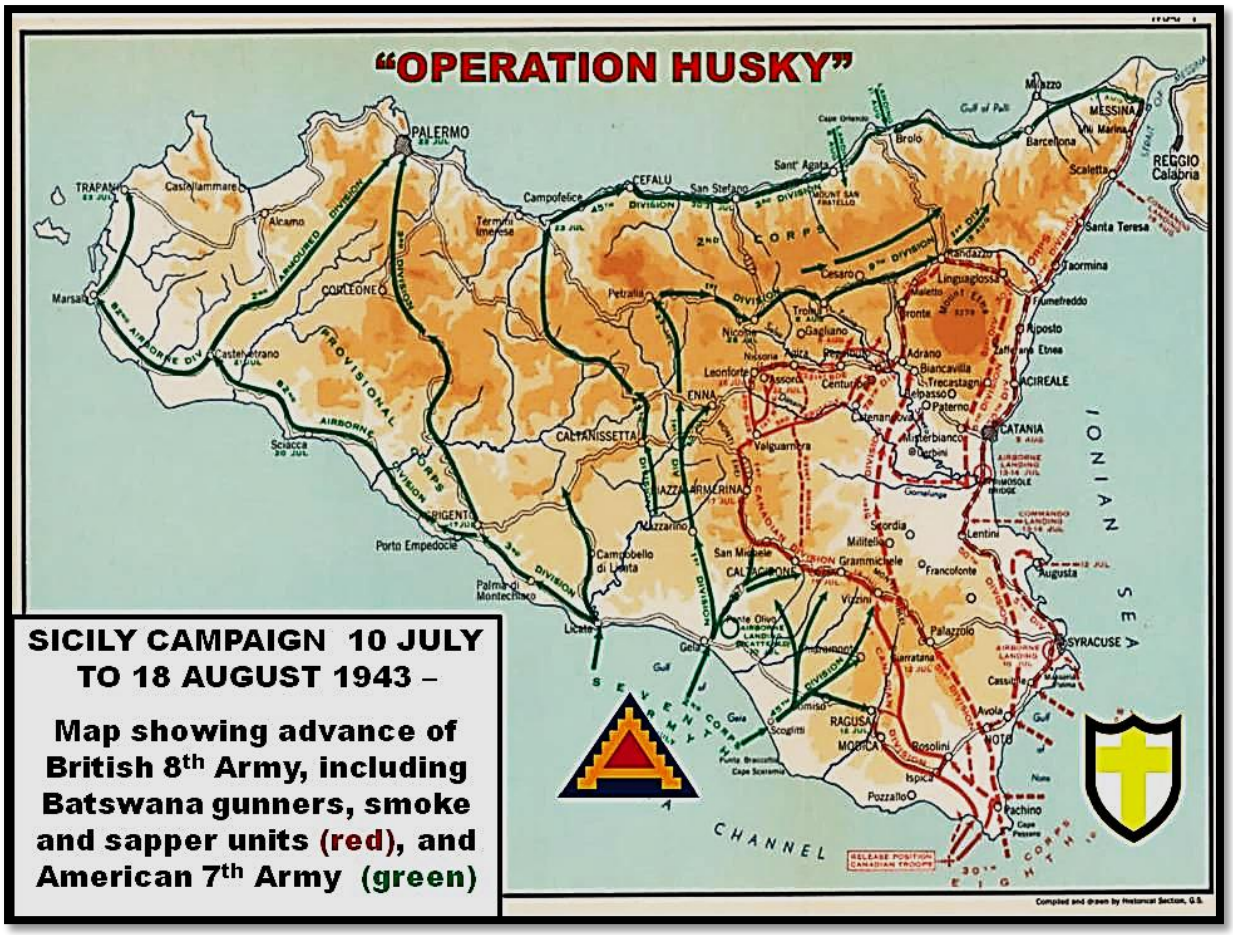
Smokers in action

Operation Husky: Storming Sicily

At the recent [1995] gathering that was held at the Kgosi Sechele I Museum in Molepolole, some 40 APC veterans, many wearing their medals along with remnants of their uniforms, joined diplomats, VIPs and ordinary members of the public in a ceremony that also opened the Museum's tribute exhibition entitled "On the Frontline, Batswana participation in World Wars I and II". Most of the

crowd of several hundred, who included many young people, were at the time seemingly stunned to hear some of their grandfathers relate their wartime experiences. It seems that a whole generation has grown up not realizing that Batswana had indeed served as combatants in the conflict. Among those who especially captivated the audience was former APC Sergeant Otlule Seboni, who produced a map in which he had coloured Italy red. He explained to the audience that the red stood for the blood of fallen comrades, describing Italy as a place in which shells used to "rain down like hailstones". He went on to describe lives still haunted by deadly air attacks and the lethal fire of German 88 Flak Guns.

It was in Italy that the "10,000 men from Bechuanaland" truly became hardened by the rigors of continuous combat. Their baptism of fire began on the 10th of July 1943, when the Batswana and Basotho Pioneers of the British 8th Army became the only Africans to take part the allied invasion of the Italian island of Sicily, codenamed "Operation Husky".



The first Batswana ashore were the Bakwena and Bangwato of 1972 Company of the B troop 209 HAA Battery, who joined other elements of the 8th Army's 73rd Regiment in taking the ancient port city of Syracuse. On the same morning they were followed into battle by the Bangwato of 1977 Smoke Company. Once off

the beach the Bakwena and Bangwato began deploying their smoke screens and 3.7 HAA guns as well as a battery of captured Italian Ansaldo artillery they had also been assigned to. The landing, itself, had been virtually unopposed as the Italians, who were now beginning to revolt against their Fascist regime, generally decided not to resist.

Unfortunately, part of the German 10th Army was also garrisoned on the island. The German counterpunch gathered force on the 14th of July with the belated arrival of Luftwaffe heavy bombers. The primary target of the German aircraft was the shipping and docking facilities at Syracuse, which was then the primary supply line for the allied forces on the island, which also included the American 5th Army under Generals George S. Patton and Omar Bradley. Over the next two weeks the men of 1972 Company distinguished themselves by shooting down 11 enemy planes, about half of the total downed over Syracuse. As the 8th Army pushed northward towards Messina the HAA units, apparently for the first time, began to successfully use their 3.7 guns in field firing against German ground forces around Cantina.

***"Bechuanaland Boys cleaning Aa Guns in the Twilight after Action, Syracuse, Sicily",* painting by Leslie Cole in the permanent collection of the Imperial War Museum, London.**

By mid-July additional Batswana Companies had also landed, namely 1967 (Bangwato), 1968 (Bangwato), 1969 (Bakwena), 1970 (Bangwaketse), 1979 (Bangwato), 1983 (Bangwaketse) and 1990 (Bangwato).

On August 11, the 1967 Company came under concentrated aerial attack at Lentini airfield. Heretofore the Batswana had miraculously suffered only two wounded during the entire invasion. But at Lentini five were killed and twenty-six wounded when a formation of 30 enemy planes swept down with anti-personnel bombs. The Lentini raid was the worst single attack suffered by Batswana during the war. Five Batswana Pioneers were subsequently commended for their unfailing courage during the raid. Their names (as recorded) were: Sergeants Otukile and Petoro, Corporals Phatsimo and Ditogile and Private Ntshonyalo. The last was among those who had fallen.

Invasion of Italy

ITALIAN CAMPAIGN 1943-45

It was in Italy that Batswana members of the APC truly became hardened by the rigors of continuous combat. Their baptism of fire began on the 10 July 1943, when the Batswana and Basotho of the British 8th Army were the only Africans to take part the allied invasion of the Italian island of Sicily, codenamed "Operation Husky".

Thereafter Batswana were among the British Empire units that served in the American 5th Army (BLUE), as well as 8th Army (RED) on the Italian mainland.

Altogether 40% of Batswana in the APC served in Italy, participating in all of the campaign's major engagements.

The invasion of Sicily led to the swift collapse of Italian Fascism. Fighting on the island was still ongoing when; on July 25, 1943 the country's notorious Dictator, Benito Mussolini, was deposed and arrested by his own Grand Council.

The last Axis resistance on the island capitulated on August 17, 1943, by which time an interim Italian government under Marshal Badoglio, backed by the King Victor Emmanuel II, was engaged in secret negotiations to switch sides in the war from the Axis to the allied or United Nations (UN) camp. The negotiations resulted in an agreement that Italy's announcement of the shift on the 3rd of September 1943 would be followed by the first of a series of landings on the Italian mainland.

On September 3, 1943 in what turned out to be a diversion, units of the British 8th Army still under General Bernard Montgomery carried out Operation Baytown. The operation involved crossing the narrow Strait of Messina, which separated Sicily from the Italian mainland, at Reggio. The operation went off without serious incident. The Italian Forces either stood down or cooperated with the invaders, while the Germans pulled back. Within 24 hours of the initial landing, Batswana of 1977 Smoke and 1990 Pioneer Companies had joined in the push up the toe of Italy to the strategic town of Crotone.

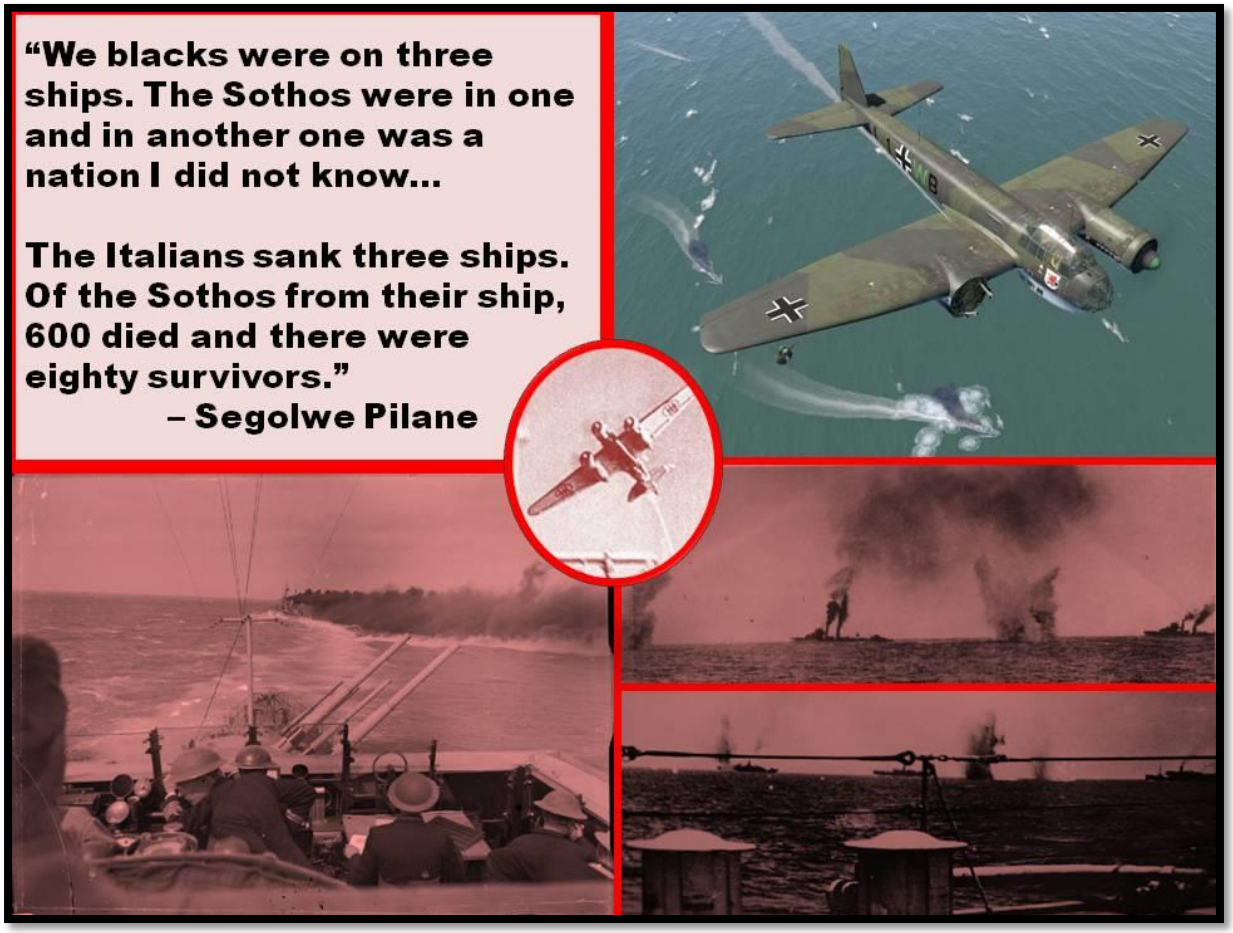
On September 8, 1943 the bulk of the 8th Army unleashed Operation Slapstick, which involved the capture of Taranto, a major port city and naval base. Welcomed by the Italian forces on the scene Taranto and the surrounding region were also quickly secured despite numerous logistical hiccups, which resulted in British troops speaking of the landing itself as "Operation Bedlam."

A total of five Batswana Companies- 1966, 1967, 1969, 1975 and 2302 participated in Operation Slapstick. Having recovered from its losses at Lentini, the 1967 Support Company was kept busy arming and fuelling RAF planes.

From Taranto, 1966 Company joined the advance on the Adriatic port of Brindisi, establishing along the way ammunition and fuel dumps for Montgomery's armoured divisions. The heavy 3.7 guns of the other units provided air cover. By October 1943, seven more Batswana companies had joined the 8th Army from Sicily and the Middle East. At the time the greatest danger was seemingly on the sea rather than land.

In May 1943 the Bakgatla of 1974 company watched helplessly as the lives of 624 of their Basotho comrades were lost when the troopship S.S. Eripura sank after being torpedoed and bombed by a German U-boat and aircraft. For many of the *masole* their narrow escape from this tragedy, like that of the earlier, First World War, sinking of the S.S. Mendi that had also been carrying many Basotho troops, confirmed the power both of their Christian prayers and dingaka's charms.

S.S. Eripura

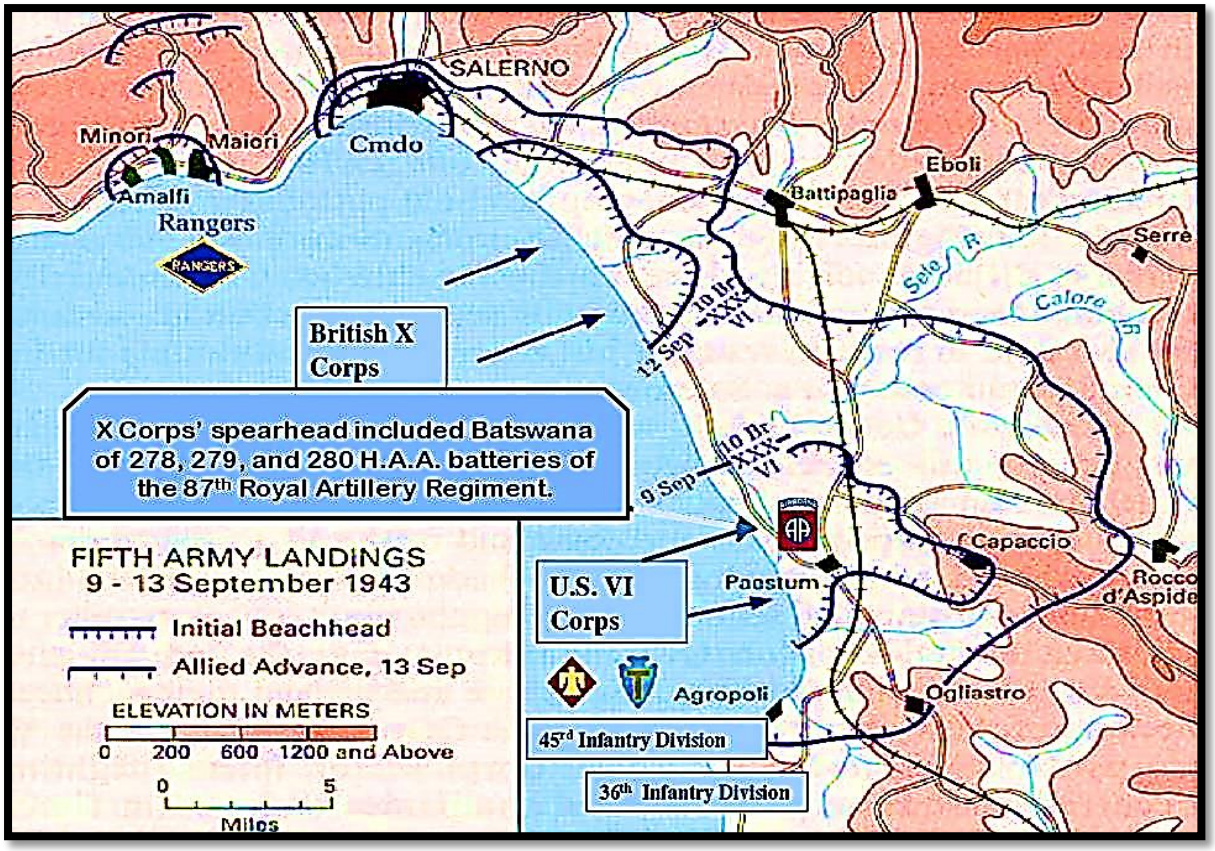

"We blacks were on three ships. The Sothos were in one and in another one was a nation I did not know...
The Italians sank three ships. Of the Sothos from their ship, 600 died and there were eighty survivors."
– Segolwe Pilane

The biggest and riskiest of the landings, which was timed for September 9, 1943, was Operation Avalanche, which involved the America 5th Army reinforced by the British 10th Corps landing at the seaside town of Salerno.

Saving Salerno

The senior UN commander General (later U.S.A. President) Dwight Eisenhower and overall theatre, British General Harold Alexander, along with his two senior deputies, Montgomery and U.S. 5th Army Commander General Mark Clark, were confident that Italy's surrender and defection to the UN camp would pave the way for a rapid UN advance through southern Italy in order to quickly secure the capital, Rome.

But this scenario was not to be. Instead, Batswana gunners of the 278, 279 and 280 HAA Artillery Batteries were prominent among those who prevented a near disastrous American defeat at Salerno. With the active collaboration of now allied Italian units the landings had been expected to be virtually unopposed. But, from the very beginning, fierce resistance was encountered. A combination of luck, intelligence and intuition had resulted in the bulk of the German 10th Army, including such elite units as the Herman Goering Panzer Division, being concentrated near the UN forces' landings allowing for their rapid deployment in the hills above the Salerno beachhead.



The anticipated advantage of overwhelming naval support had also been compromised during the landings by the German deployment of the world's first operational guided missile, the Fritz X, as well as conventional aerial bombing.

As the armies came together, the resulting Battle of Salerno, which lasted from the 9th through the 18th of September 1943, proved to be one of the decisive military events of the Second World War. A German victory there as well as in the ongoing and to some extent interrelated fighting between German and Soviet forces in the central sector of the Eastern Front might have given the Third Reich time to mobilize its defences in order to stave off its pending defeat.

We know that such at least was Hitler's ambition. The collapse of Italy and the Soviet push across the plains of Ukraine and Belarus following their great victory at Stalingrad had by then made ultimate German defeat appear ever more likely in the eyes of senior German officers as well as Nazi leadership. For his part, the evil dictator hoped to buy time by securing the flanks of his "Fortress Europe" with a defensive "Eastern Wall" against the Soviets and "Mediterranean Moat" against the Anglo-American led southern front. The later however required a decisive victory in Italy.

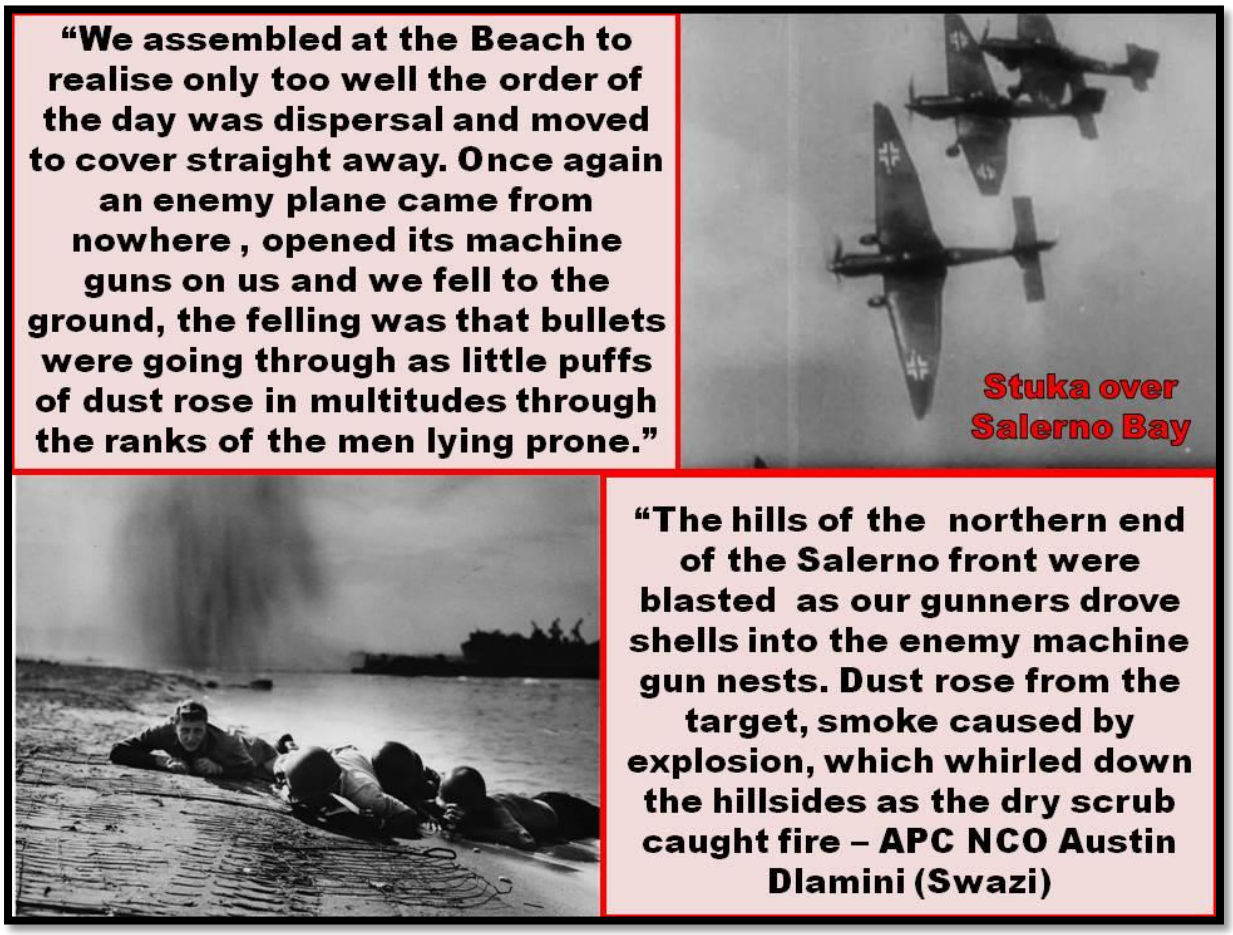
If the UN advance could thus be stemmed, Hitler and his cohorts reasoned Germany could regain the advantage through the deployment of a new generation of super weapons then being readied for battle, which included the ME 262 Jet, the revolutionary Type XXI Submarine and the V1 and V2 Rockets (with the massive intercontinental V3 on the drawing boards), as well as the already deployed but in short supply Fritz X Missiles and a new generation of mobile armour platforms, epitomized by the Tiger Tank.

Fortunately, we now know that progress on the one super weapon that might have actually tipped the balance, the German *"Uranverein"* (Uranium Club) project to develop a nuclear weapon, had in 1941 been de-prioritised in preference for investment in jet propulsion and rocket and missile development. In contrast to the briefings received by the US President Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Churchill, the theoretical potential of nuclear technology had to a critical extent been hidden from Hitler.

During the landings, the Germans unleashed the Fritx X on U.N. shipping and port facilities in the Mediterranean. The guided missile, when launched from specially designed Dornier light bombers was a formidable challenge to the UN forces including Batswana gunners and smokescreen operators. On September 9, 1943 the British and now allied Italian fleets suffered heavy losses when the Fritz X was deployed for the first time. This further complicated the task of Gen. McCreery's 10th Corps, incorporating 1976 (Bangwato) Company, which had landed at Salerno as the spearhead of Operation Avalanche only to find themselves in front of reinforced units of the German 10th Army holding the high ground.

The Tiger Tank Busters

By the 13th of September 1943 securing the Mediterranean perimeter at least seemed to be within the German's grasp with the Fifth Army finding itself divided and pinned down by the enemy. Besides the advantage of holding the high ground with superior armour, the 10th Army was both better led and more experienced (many of the 5th Army's American troops were facing hostile fire for the first time).


"We assembled at the Beach to realise only too well the order of the day was dispersal and moved to cover straight away. Once again an enemy plane came from nowhere , opened its machine guns on us and we fell to the ground, the felling was that bullets were going through as little puffs of dust rose in multitudes through the ranks of the men lying prone."
Stuka over Salerno Bay
"The hills of the northern end of the Salerno front were blasted as our gunners drove shells into the enemy machine gun nests. Dust rose from the target, smoke caused by explosion, which whirled down the hillsides as the dry scrub caught fire – APC NCO Austin Dlamini (Swazi)

Defeat at Salerno was ultimately averted by a gun line of artillery that notably included the Batswana batteries of the 87th HAA Regiment. After their success at Syracuse the Batswana had been brought ashore with the expectation that their 3.7 Guns would provide air cover against high altitude bombers. But their role was quickly altered by the desperate situation on the beaches. The 3.7 barrels were instead depressed for field firing against German armoured units and artillery in the hills above Salerno. In this context the HAA's proved their effectiveness in disabling the heavily armoured Tiger Tanks.

The German's responded by raking the gun line with their .88 flak guns. When this failed to silence the Batswana and their colleagues, the gunners were attacked

from the air. With Fritz X's playing havoc on U.N. naval units, Luftwaffe fighters were able fly in low over Salerno Bay to attack the gun line from the rear. With their barrels targeted at the hills, the Batswana were completely vulnerable to aerial strafing.

Fortunately other, light anti-aircraft batteries were rushed into their sector to provide much needed support. On the morning of the 13th, it appeared that the gun line would be overrun, but by the evening of the 14th the Germans were finally forced to pull back. On September 18, the 5th Army was able to link up with the 8th Army, which by now included over 3,000 additional Batswana troops. The immediate prospect of defeat had been averted but the battle was not over.

Daring Dozen at Bari

In the days that followed the Batswana HAA batteries helped provide artillery cover for the 5th Army's advance on the major Italian port city of Naples. As part of the frontline, they thus became engaged in the final, fierce stages of the heavy fighting at Chiunzi Pass, otherwise known as "88 Junction" for the number of troops cut down by the notorious German .88 flak guns.

In the shadow of the famous Mount Vesuvius volcano, the pass had been taken by US Special Forces of the 3rd and 4th Ranger Battalions at the beginning of the Salerno campaign. But in the context of the near disaster at the beach head they had subsequently found themselves cut off behind enemy lines for eighteen days. As part of the relief column, the Batswana gunners were among those who took causalities in the face of a constant barrage from German mortars, flak guns and armour. For its part the Germans 10th Army continued to put up a stout resistance, taking advantage of the mountainous terrain to once more stall the advance of their opponents.

The tide of the battle began to shift on September 27, 1943 when the people of Naples rose up in a popular uprising that over the next four days largely liberated their city from the German occupiers; an important milestone in the emergence of the Italian Resistance as a significant force in the unfolding struggle. Finding their position now untenable the Germans concentrated on destroying the harbour's infrastructure before finally evacuating the city on the 1st of October.

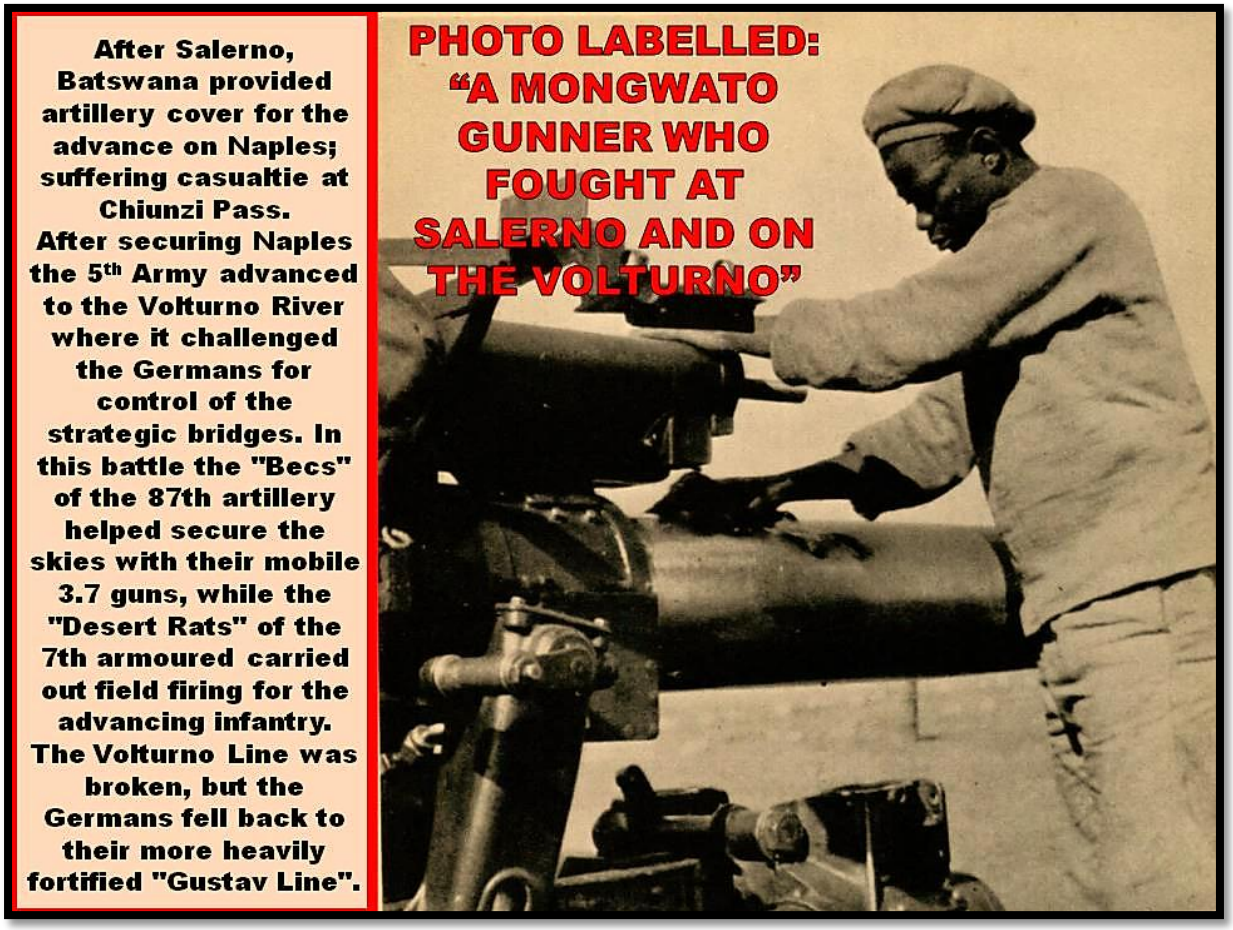
The 10th Army, however, quickly redeployed to form part of the defensive "Volturno Line" that by then ran across Italy from Castle Volturno on the west coast to the Adriatic port of Bari on the east coast. The latter town was captured by the 8th Army on the 4th of October.

After securing Naples, the 5th Army advanced to the Volturno River where it challenged the Germans for control of the strategic bridges at Capua, Grazzianise and Cancello. In this battle the "Fighting Becs" of the 87th artillery helped secure the skies with their mobile 3.7 guns, while other Batswana among the "Desert Rats" of the 7th armoured division carried out field firing for the advancing infantry.

On October 19, 1943 the Volturno Line was broken, but the Germans continued to inflict heavy casualties on the various allied forces now arrayed against them, while falling back to their more heavily fortified "Gustav Line". In this further advance the Batswana gunners were once more ordered to revert to field firing on German panzer (tank) units in the hills around the Gulf of Gaeta. Thereafter, a Luftwaffe attack on the Bangwato and Bakwena gunners resulted in the downing of six German planes around the small coastal town of Mondragone. Former APC Pioneer Corp Major R.A.R. Bent later wrote:

"The fine work of the regiment from Salerno to the Garigliano approaches had earned its Colonel the D.S.O. [Distinguished Service Order], and the honour of one was the honour of all. The spirit of the Bangwato gunners during these months of battle is hard to describe; it was sufficient to say that they were on top

of the world, serving and firing great guns which were of no mean account in forcing the enemy from one position to another. No effort was too much for them, nor could anything terrify them: the African gunners' dream of firing in the field had been fulfilled."


After Salerno, Batswana provided artillery cover for the advance on Naples; suffering casualtie at Chiunzi Pass.
After securing Naples the 5th Army advanced to the Volturno River where it challenged the Germans for control of the strategic bridges. In this battle the "Becs" of the 87th artillery helped secure the skies with their mobile 3.7 guns, while the "Desert Rats" of the 7th armoured carried out field firing for the advancing infantry.
The Volturno Line was broken, but the Germans fell back to their more heavily fortified "Gustav Line".
PHOTO LABELLED: "A MONGWATO GUNNER WHO FOUGHT AT SALERNO AND ON THE VOLTURNO"

Meanwhile, at Bari, the Batswana of 1979 APC Smoke Company also distinguished itself during a massive evening Luftwaffe raid. The enemy had hit an ammunition ship close to a 24-man Batswana platoon, which began to burn out of control. Aware of the danger the Batswana held their ground. When the explosion occurred five were killed and another seven critically wounded. One of the wounded was miraculously rescued floating unconscious out to sea with a head wound. He had been given up for dead when he returned to his unit fourteen days later.

During the raid the dozen survivors struggled to maintain the screen surrounded by fire and death. A total of thirteen ships were sunk during the raid, all from hits sustained in the four minutes before the smoke screen was raised and maintained.

But for the men of 1979 Company, in particular, a bad situation could have undoubtedly been much worse. For personal heroism in rallying his men following the explosion Corporal Chitu Bakombi was awarded the British Empire Medal, while the platoon's officer, Lieutenant N.F. Moor was awarded an M.B.E.

Building Bridges in A Day

It is one of the sad ironies of history that great examples of human productivity have often occurred during the course of wars. This was certainly true of the Second World War, which constitutes an extreme example of humankind's productive as well as destructive capacity. It should, therefore, come as no surprise that one finds incredible examples of productivity among the Batswana APC. As with any military formation the routine tasks of some of the troops were, in this respect, mundane but vital.

Many Batswana, for example, manned petrol depots during the British 8th Army's advance up the Italian peninsula. In a 12-hour period one 90-man unit was reported to have washed, filled, stacked and loaded 295,000 litres of petrol. Another 70-man unit did 215,000, while a 120-man group prided itself on a consistent output of 40,000 an hour.

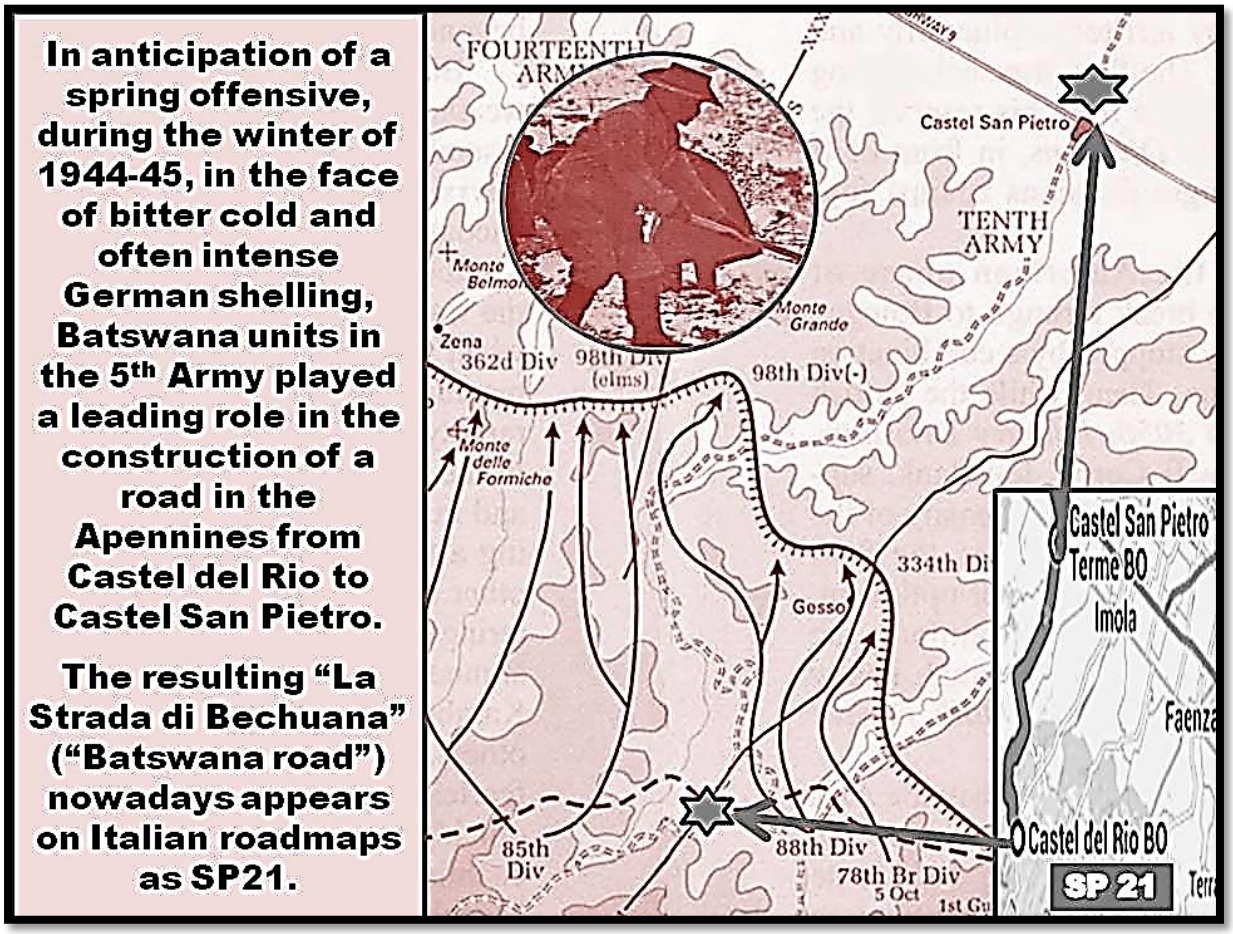
Other Batswana companies took pride in their ability to assemble prefabricated Bailey Bridges, designed with the capacity to withstand the weight of entire armoured columns, in a day. Apparently, some of these "Bechuana bridges" were at least until quite recently still in service, as are fortifications built by Batswana in Lebanon.

In 1943 the Bakwena of 1969 Company won special praise for their speedy construction of what was then the world's biggest ever prefabricated bridge over the Sangro River (a feat that was featured on the cover of Life Magazine).

IN NOVEMBER 1943, BAKWENA OF 1969 COMPANY CONSTRUCTED WHAT WAS THEN THE WORLD'S LARGEST PREFABRICATED BRIDGE, THE 343M BAILEY BRIDGE OVER THE SANGRO RIVER

PRINCIPAL SANGRO RIVER BRIDGE UNDER CONSTRUCTION

During the winter of 1944, in the face of bitter cold and often intense German shelling, the same Company joined several other Batswana units in building and maintaining a road across the Apennines Mountains from Castel del Rio to Castel San Pietro. The resulting “La Strada di Bechuana” (“Batswana Road”) appeared on Italian roadmaps.


In anticipation of a spring offensive, during the winter of 1944-45, in the face of bitter cold and often intense German shelling, Batswana units in the 5th Army played a leading role in the construction of a road in the Apennines from Castel del Rio to Castel San Pietro.
The resulting “La Strada di Bechuana” (“Batswana road”) nowadays appears on Italian roadmaps as SP21.
FOURTEENTH ARMY
Castel San Pietro
TENTH ARMY
Monte Belmonte
Monte Grande
Zena
362d Div
98th Div (elms)
98th Div(-)
Monte delle Formiche
334th Di
Gesso
Castel San Pietro Terme BO
Imola
Faenza
85th Div
88th Div
78th Br Div
5 Oct
1st Gu
Castel del Rio BO
SP 21

The Batswana themselves apparently called the Apennines route “kapoko” (snow or sleet). When the ice melted the corridor enabled the American commanded multinational 5th Army to seize the great city of Bologna, while finally outflanking the German 10th Army in the Po valley.

Batswana were also kept busy laying and maintaining railway track. One war correspondent could not resist the line that it was now the Bechuana Pioneers (rather than Mussolini) who “kept the trains of Italy running on time”.

It is difficult to generalize about the experiences of Batswana who served in the African Pioneer Corps (1941-46). Only recently has there been an effort to collect and record surviving accounts. From the available documentary, as well as oral, evidence it is clear that their experiences varied greatly.

Some Batswana were thrust into combat roles. Others were not. Some forged close, even intimate, contacts with foreigners: Europeans, Arabs, other Africans and (especially black) Americans. To others such men and women remained an alien mystery.

About 40% of the masole participated in the bloody two-year allied advance up the Italian peninsula. There they were often cold and wet; spending icy winters in tents or crude billets in the snow-covered Apennines Mountains. Most of the other Batswana spent the war more quietly in the burning sands of Egypt and Libya.

Batswana troops were greeted by such notable figures as King George VI, Winston Churchill, Jan Smuts and top Generals like Montgomery and Mark Clark. On March 26, 1945 a handful of Batswana joined some Basotho and Swazi in having what was considered the great honour of an audience with Pope Pius

XII, a reflection of the Vatican's growing interest in the High Commission Territories.

For many, the experience of war strengthened their Christian convictions. This helped to spur a post-war expansion of independent church movements, as well as a more modest growth in the traditional mission-based churches, which then enjoyed the exclusive sanction of dikgosi. Before gaining prominence in the Freedom Squares ex-APC Sergeant P.G. Matante honed his oratory skills as a Pentecostal preacher, at one point launching his own “St. Phillip's Apostolic Church”.

A few veterans were exposed to the alternative doctrines of Communism and Pan-Africanism in semi-clandestine meetings. Cross-cultural contact was, however, often limited by language. Only a few Batswana then spoke English, much less Arabic or Italian. From 1943 existing informal programmes to promote both literacy and the use of English were given an official boost with the appointment of Education Sergeants.

Another tool for promoting literacy was a newsletter from back home edited by the Director of the Bechuanaland Education Department, Henry Dumbrell. This publication was inserted as a supplement into copies of the APC weekly newsletter *Indlovu/Tlou*.

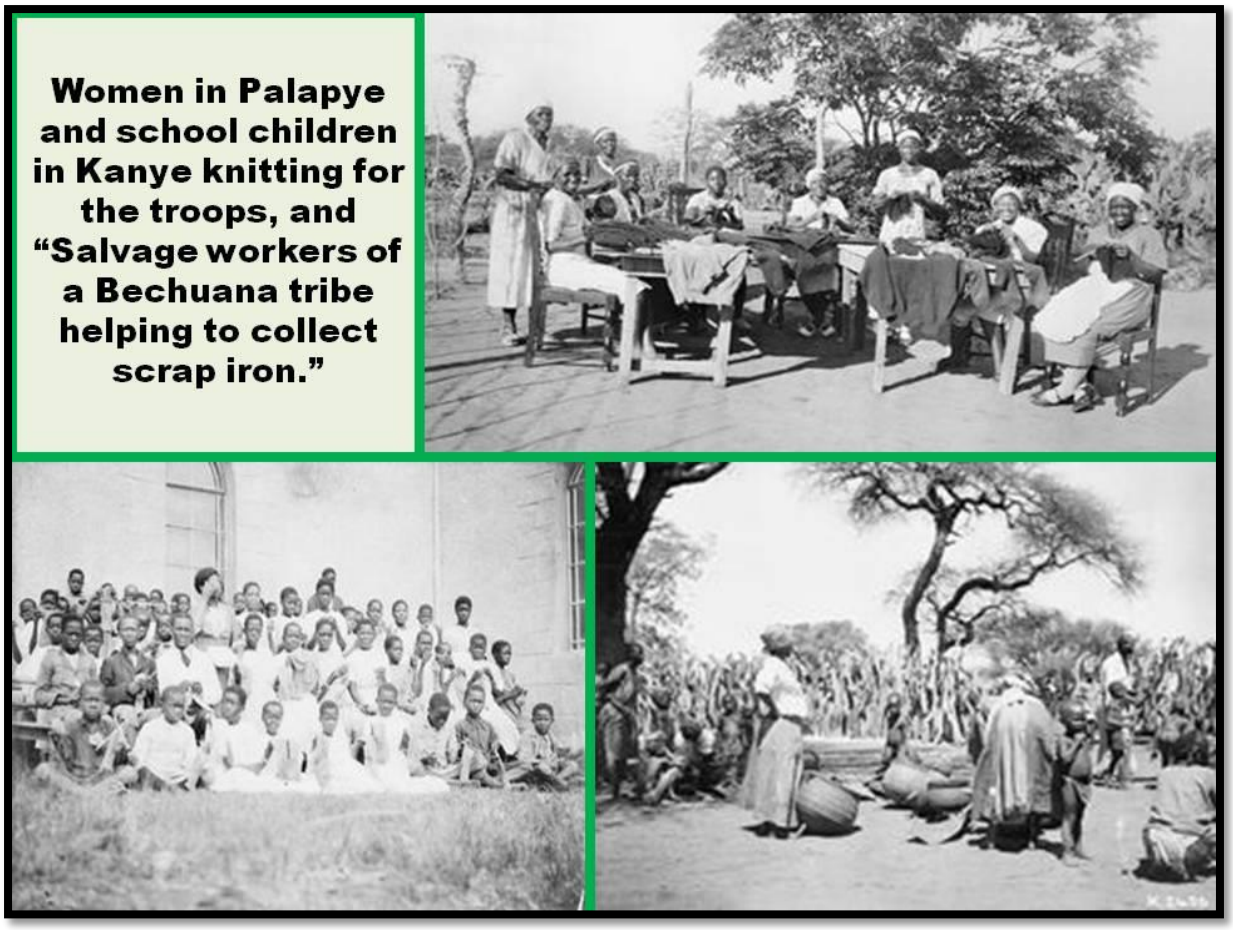
The soldiers were also issued with copies of the self-described "leading South African native newspaper" *Umtetli wa Bantu*, which was sponsored by mining interests and otherwise contained home news forwarded by the colonial government. In 1944 these home news efforts were expanded and consolidated with the launch a new, officially sponsored, Setswana newspaper- *Naledi ya Batswana.*

African Leave Camp, Egypt
Bechuanaland Bugle and Drum Band leading victory prade in Cairo
Off Duty
Christmas Day in the Middle East

The Homefront

The Second World War was fought as a "total war" in which entire societies were mobilized to defeat the enemy. This meant that women as well as men were mobilised, though in the case of Botswana not as soldiers. Elsewhere, over three million women, mostly Russians and Chinese, but also many Americans, British (such as the late Lady Khama) and others served in uniform, often in combat roles.

More significant, however, was the role that women on all sides played in keeping factories and farms producing at record high levels.

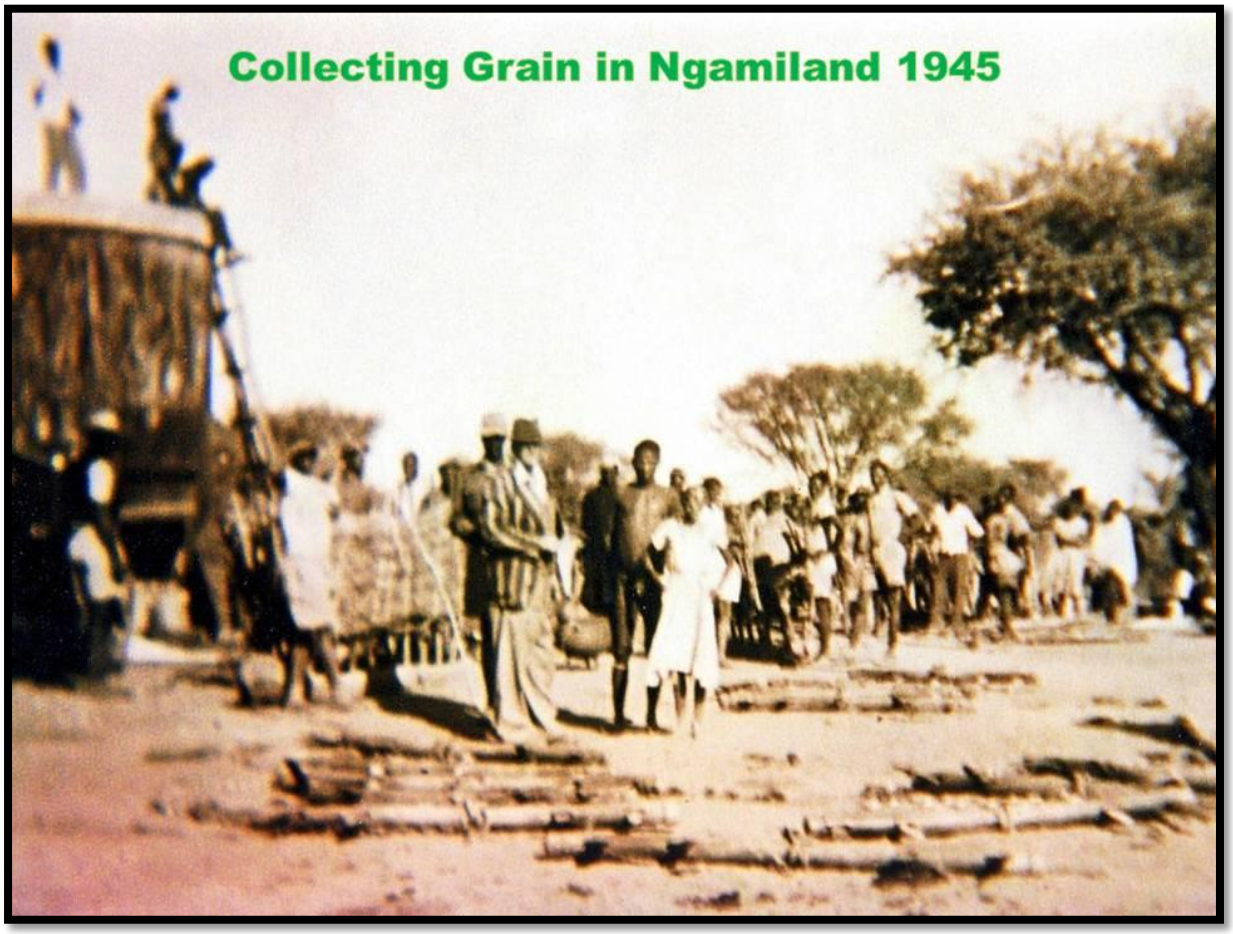

Women in Palapye and school children in Kanye knitting for the troops, and "Salvage workers of a Bechuana tribe helping to collect scrap iron."

With 60% of the able-bodied men either in the army or working in South Africa, the wartime burden of Batswana women was especially heavy. Notwithstanding the fact that Botswana had not known genuine food self-sufficiency since at least the 1890s, they were expected to sustain their families through domestic farming. As Miriam Pilane would recall many years later, many young wives experienced tough times:

"I was worried that I was going to have problems as I was still breastfeeding my first baby. My husband left in 1942 and came back in 1946. We were suffering but anyway we were helped by two families, my family and my husband's family. The problem was that even if they helped it wasn't satisfactory as they ploughed their land first, and by the time they got to ours it was late. At time we hired some men to plough our fields. Some would just agree with you but never turn, until you gave up hope. No one helped us. The morafe took no effort to help the wives of soldiers…"

Mrs. Pilane further recalled the solidarity that then existed among the soldiers' wives, as well the importance of receiving remittances on behalf of their husbands from the army:

"The wives of the soldiers stuck together because we met at the offices when we went to collect our money from our husbands, we were given £2.5s (two-pound, five shilling) a month to help ourselves. Things were very cheap and if you failed to plough you could just buy maize or mealie meal with your money or hire someone to help…We helped each other when ploughing by calling other women and cooking a lot of food and even beer and after ploughing would eat and drink."



While the monthly remittances, which came into the territory from men working in the mines and factories in South Africa as well as the military, were certainly welcome, their value was eroded by war time inflation. The situation became much harder in 1945-46 when severe drought broke out resulting increased hunger.

Notwithstanding their own daily struggle to survive, women were also expected to till communal plots- some 202 hectares in Molepolole alone- as part of the Bechuanaland Protectorate's "war-lands" production. The war-land exercise had its roots in a scheme to boost agriculture, which was conceived as a local development initiative in early 1939, immediately prior to the war's outbreak.

Unlike the original scheme, which was designed to promote communal food security, the British hoped in vain that the war lands, subsequently known as "Tribal Agricultural Production Lands" would create a grain surplus for export.

The granaries that still grace the central makgotla of many villages are monuments to this considerable albeit not overwhelmingly successful effort. The scheme was perhaps most successful in Gammangwato, where it was embraced by Kgosi Tshekedi Khama, who is remembered to have distributed grain to areas and individuals in need. In the process the war-lands, however, became another source of conflict between him and She John Madawu Nswazwi VIII, who refused to contribute to the central granaries in Serowe.

Formally organised as the "African Women War Workers" (WWW), females were encouraged, if not coerced, to work in gifts and comforts production units for the troops, producing such things as socks, gloves, mufflers and *marabaraba* boards for the men. Altogether these groups produced over 30,000 items during the war.

Levies were also imposed to finance WWW efforts, though the woman's labour, often mobilized through female mephato was supposedly "voluntary". Additional youth labour was enlisted through local Girl Guides and Wayfarers.

At Mochudi Mmakgosi Seingwaeng succeeded in using her control over the female mephato to negotiate for the political rehabilitation of her son, Kgosi Molefi, who had been suspended from Bogosi before the war.

There were other impositions, including various fundraising campaigns. A 5-pound levy was thus imposed on households for the "Spitfire Fund", which raised £10,400 towards the purchase of two of the fighter planes that were duly named the "Bechuanaland" and "Kalahari". From a 1944 praise poem (*leboka*) by Selebatso "S.G." Masimega:

"Tsa tlhoga tsa kgethwa name tsa masogwana, Diphologolo loruo lwa bana ba ga Motswasele, Me pnto tlhano monneng tsa uwelawela, Hare marino le tiro tsona di tshwang fela, Ka utwa tlhabani e tlhabanwa ka tiro le marumo a bogale."

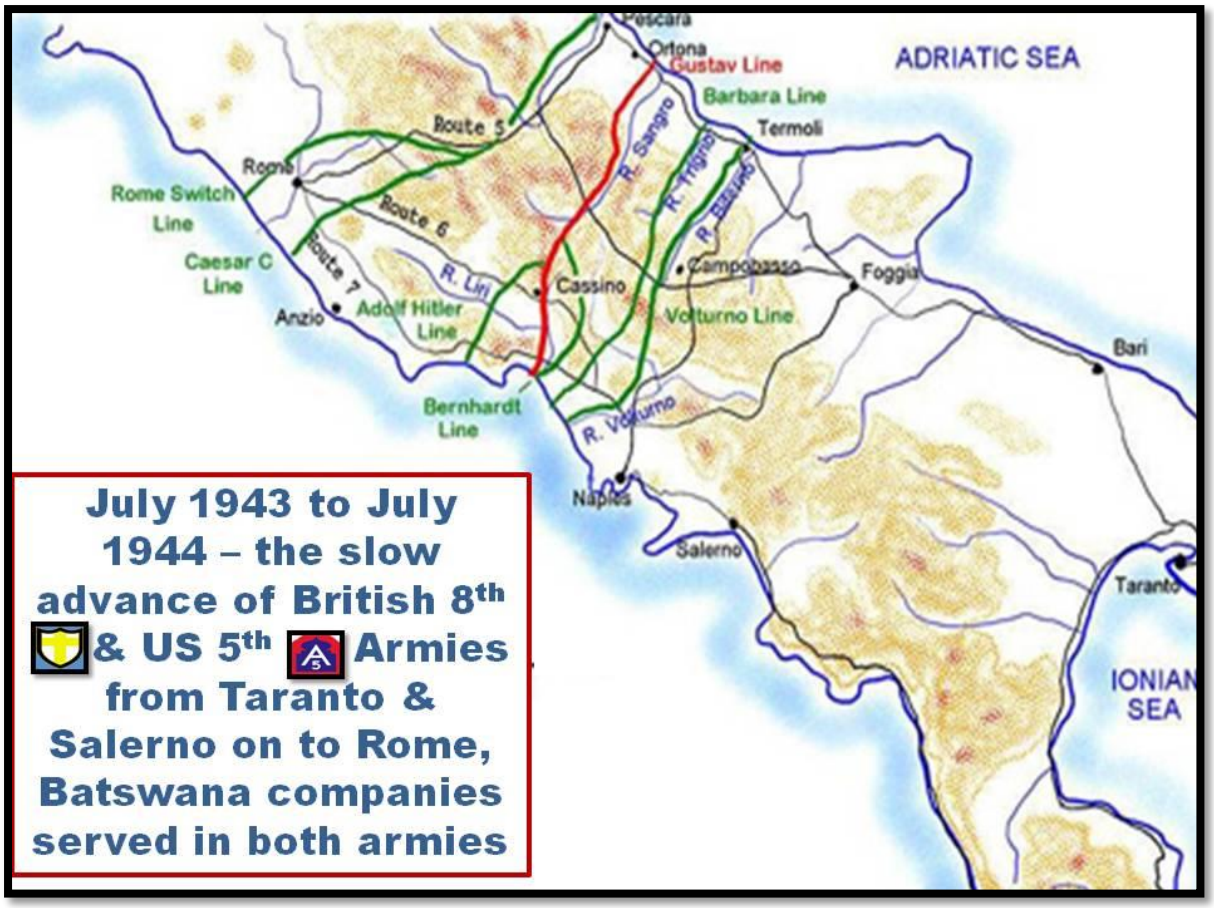
Several thousand additional pounds were raised in other fundraising campaigns included "Navy Weeks" that notably involved the territory's then small black elite together with members of the Asian and white community, a modest example of multi-racialism that at the time contrasted with the then stark racial divide in neighbouring jurisdictions.

YOUR 'SPITFIRES' IN ACTION
Thank you, Bechuanaland!
There were other impositions. A 5 pound levy was imposed on all households to pay for two Spitfires- the "Bechuanaland" and "Kalahari". From a 1944 leboka by S.G. Masimega:
"Tsa tlhoga tsa kgethwa name tsa masogwana, Diphologolo loruo lwa bana ba ga Motswasele, Me pnto tlhano monneng tsa uwelawela, Hare marino le tiro tsona di tshwang fela, Ka utwa tlhabani e tlhabanwa ka tiro le marumo a bogale."

The sudden need for the Protectorate Administration, which had come to depend on colonial grant money during the 1930s depression, to meet all of its expenses further resulted in an overall increase in levies and taxes, which persisted after the war.

Marumong

After the fall of Naples and the crossing of the Sangro and Volturno rivers, in October-November 1943, fighting between the Anglo-American led United Nations and German occupation forces in southern Italy entered into a temporary stalemate. With winter setting in the Germans were able to consolidate their "Gustav Line" defences, which ran across the peninsula south of Rome. By now several thousand Batswana were at the front.



The winter itself was especially bad, with floods along the Adriatic adding to the misery of constant sleet and snow. In the forward areas the Batswana, along with other frontline troops, were often forced to abandon their relatively comfortable billets (metal prefab shelters) for tents dug into the mud. These at least provided greater security from enemy shelling. All along the line the Germans continued to enjoy the advantage of holding the high ground.

Perhaps the most interesting event to break the monotony of the dreary 1943-44 winter was the sudden eruption of Mount Vesuvius. The 1977 (Bangwato) and 1980 (Bakwena) Companies were camped at the foot of the volcano when the "rivers of fire" began to flow and had to thus be hastily evacuated.

Both Companies were then being transferred to the multinational US 5th Army to take part in the great battle for Monte Cassino, a historic 6th century hilltop abbey which dominated the nearby town of Cassino and the entrances to the Liri valley, which served as the route for Highway 6 leading to Rome.

The need to take the mountain became all the more desperate when an American attempt to outflank the Germans by landing at Anzio, north of the Gustav Line, became bogged down.

Batswana called Monte (Mount) Cassino *"Marumong",* in this context meaning "place of bullets/shells". The name was appropriate given that over 75,000 men were killed in the fierce five-month engagement.

The battle consisted of four UN offensives, three of which ended in frustration. Batswana, more especially 1977 Company, were prominent in the third offensive in March 1944 when they provided smoke cover for the advancing 2nd New Zealand Division. Initially all went well with Cassino town and railway station being secured by the New Zealanders, while its castle fortress was overrun by the 4th Indian Division.

But, the Germans atop the strategic Monte Cassino could not be dislodged. From the now bombed out monastery they were able to pound the attackers with their artillery. It then became the task of 1977 to dodge machine gun fire in order to establish smoke screens in front of the enemy lines. Notwithstanding their determination in the face of heavy enemy fire, the Batswana were not very successful. High winds prevented the maintenance of a proper smokescreen. As a result, they apparently received some unfair blame.

This scapegoating was noted by R.A.R Bent, who in his book *10,000 Men of Africa* gives a rather weak and altogether unnecessary apology for the failure. In fact, none of the other smoke Companies that were also engaged on the day enjoyed any greater success.

In the end Gustav Line was only overrun in May 1944 after a massive, bloody assault by the Polish and American 2nd Corps, British 13th Corps and a Free French Corps made up mostly of Moroccans and Algerians.

After the capture of Monte Cassino, the UN forces in Italy pushed the Germans out of central Italy, taking Rome on the 4th of June 1944. The enemy then fell back to its "Gothic Line", a series of defences 16 kilometres deep stretching over 200 kilometres across some of the highest mountains of the Apennines. Veteran Julius Segano would later recall:

"The Gothic Line was too terrible. It was in June when we bombed that place, though the Germans we were pushing back had dug into the mountains."

To the north was the Po valley, where industrial heartland of northern Italy was located. Beyond were the Alpine passes that led into Germany proper. A million German troops manned the Gothic line, which came under sustained assault from August through October 1944. Keeping such large numbers of the enemy pinned down was a major allied objective.

For their part the ranks of the allied 5th and 8th Armies had been both qualitatively and quantitatively reduced to meet the demands of "Operation Overlord", the great cross channel invasion of France. The services of the Batswana, along with Basotho, British Indian and Mauritian, Pioneers were thus in especially high demand all along the frontline.

In August the renaissance city of Firenze (Florence) fell in bitter fighting to the 5th Army's South African division. Within days the Pioneers of 1969 (Bakwena) Company had erected Bailey bridges across the Arno River.

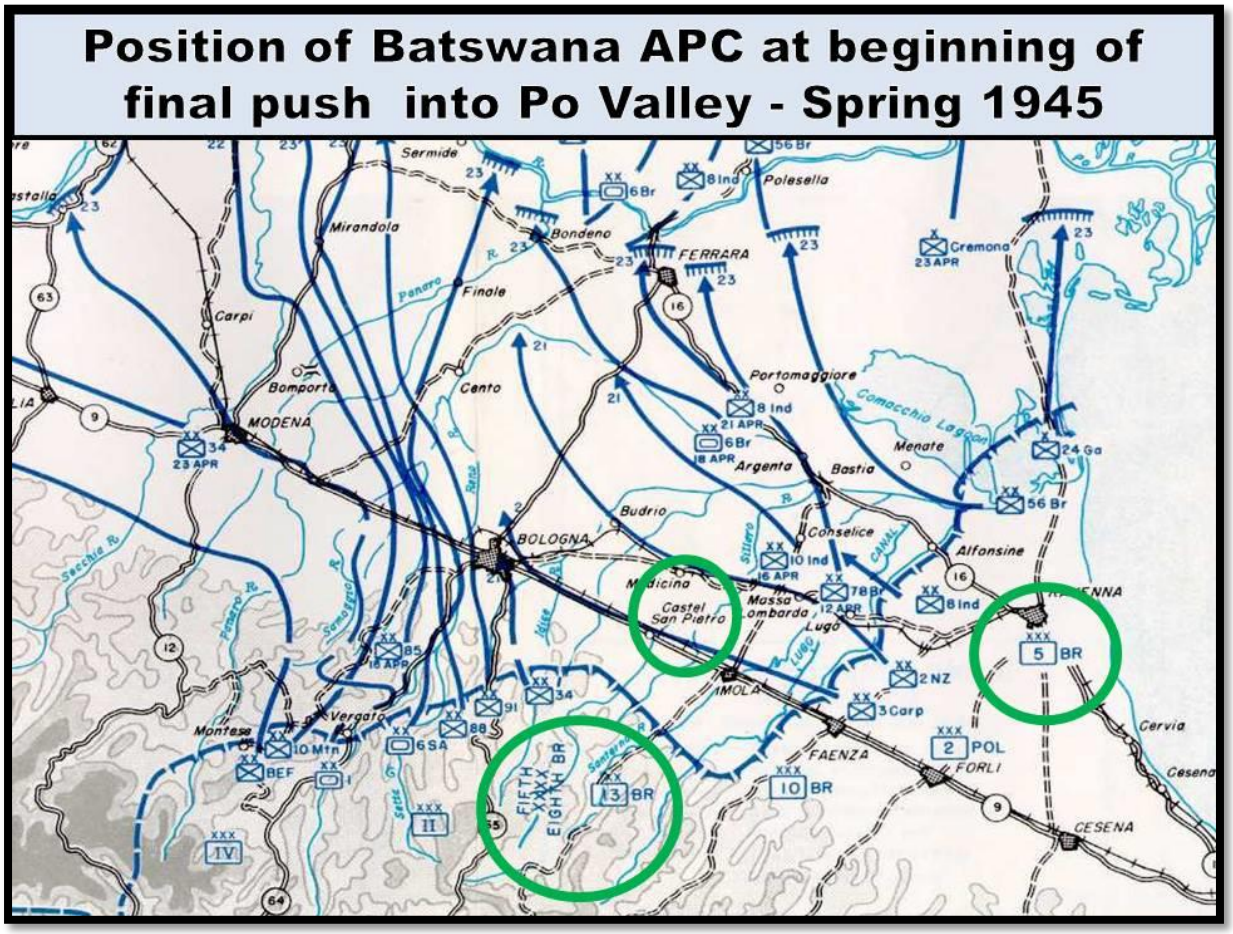
Elsewhere Batswana Pioneers were busy manning ammo and petrol dumps, unloading ships, cutting roads and servicing RAF bases. By the end of 1944, with the decline of enemy air activity, many of the Batswana HAA gunners were once more assigned field firing roles, taking part in long running artillery duels.

Victory in Europe

At the end of 1944 German troops, reinforced by diehard Italian fascist units continued to man the Gothic Line, which resisted sustained allied assault until March 1945. Keeping such large numbers of the enemy pinned down, while the allied invasion of France proceeded was, however, a major strategic objective. With the ranks of British Empire and American forces had been depleted by the withdrawal of units to fight in southern France. The services of the Batswana,

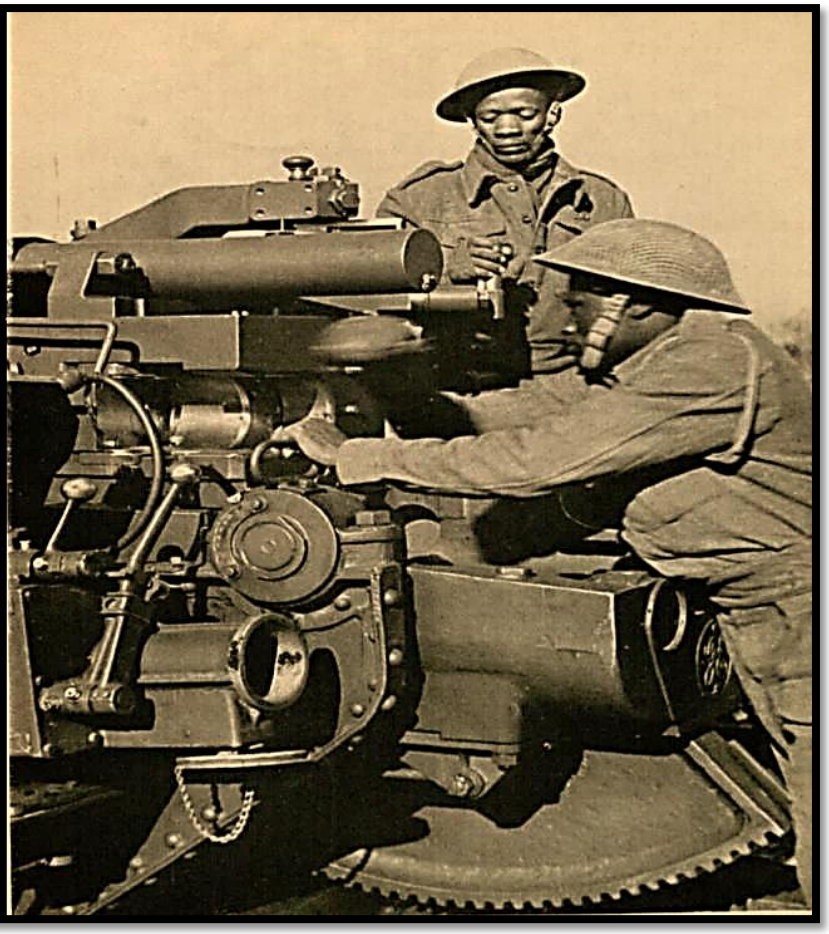
along with Basotho, British Indian, and Mauritian, Pioneers were thus in especially high demand all along the frontline.

In August the renaissance city of Firenze (Florence) fell in bitter fighting to the 5th Army's South African division. Within days the Pioneers of 1969 (Bakwena) Company had erected Bailey bridges across the Arno River.



Elsewhere Batswana Pioneers were busy manning ammo and petrol dumps, unloading ships, cutting roads and servicing RAF bases. By the end of 1944, with the decline of enemy air activity, many of the Batswana HAA gunners were once more assigned field firing roles, taking part in long running artillery duels.

Batswana gunners in actions against German armour units at Senio, Italy



APC Major R.A.R. Bent : The spirit of the Bangwato gunners during these months of battle is hard to describe; it was sufficient to say that they were on top of the world, serving and firing great guns which were of no mean account in forcing the enemy from one position to another. No effort was too much for them, nor could anything terrify them: the African gunners' dream of firing in the field had been fulfilled."

Apparently writing on behalf of his unit, APC Sergeant Sampson sent a letter with enclosed picture to the British Resident Commissioner in Mahikeng expressing his pride weapon and esprit d 'corps:

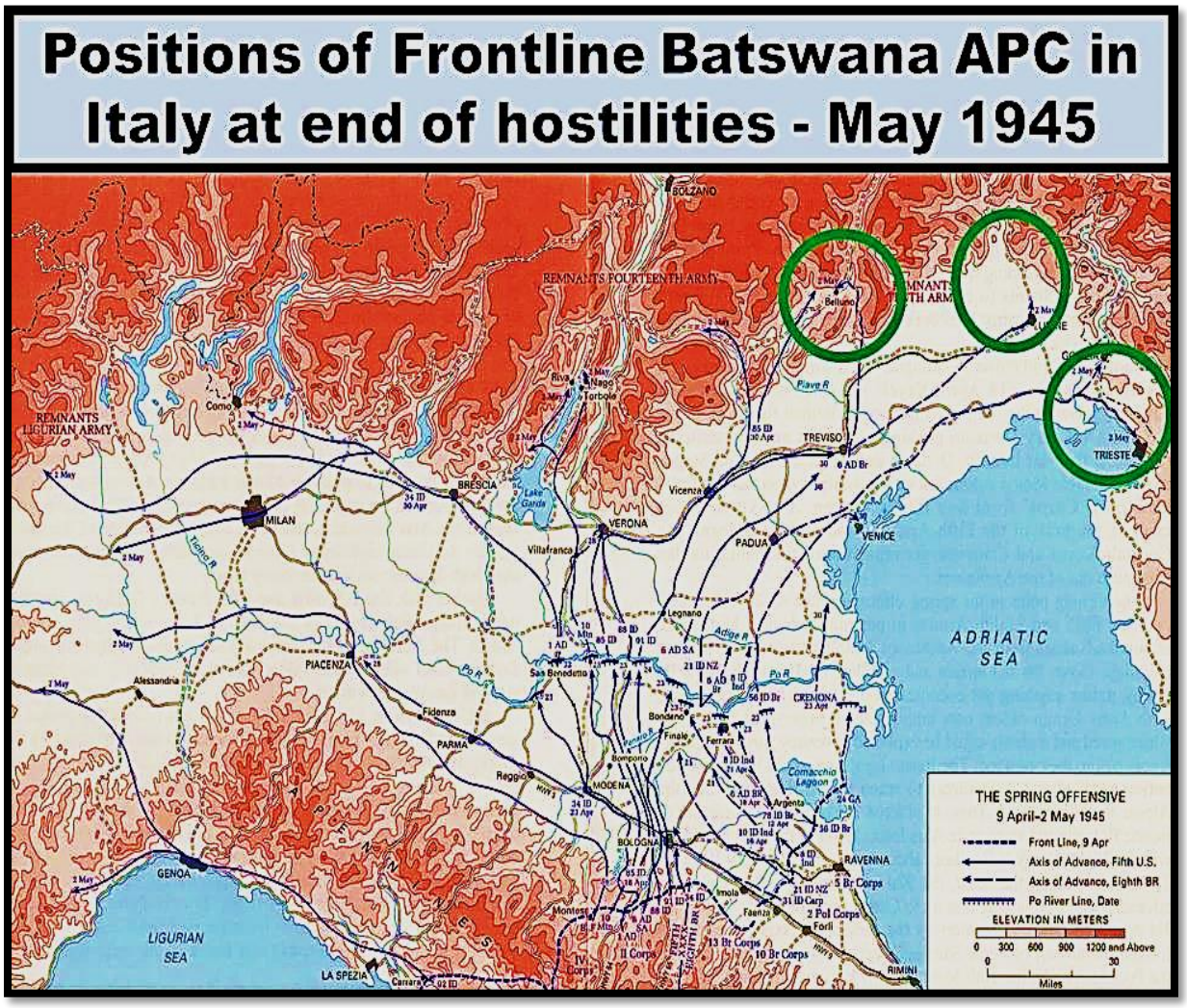
"This is a picture of our friend that we are proud of "Mobile Gun". With the aid of this machine, the enemy can hardly succeed in shooting or capturing us then it is his last day…today we are calm and collected under all circumstances, burning only with the desire to get a grip on the enemy and so great is our ardour that we feel like tearing him with our teeth."

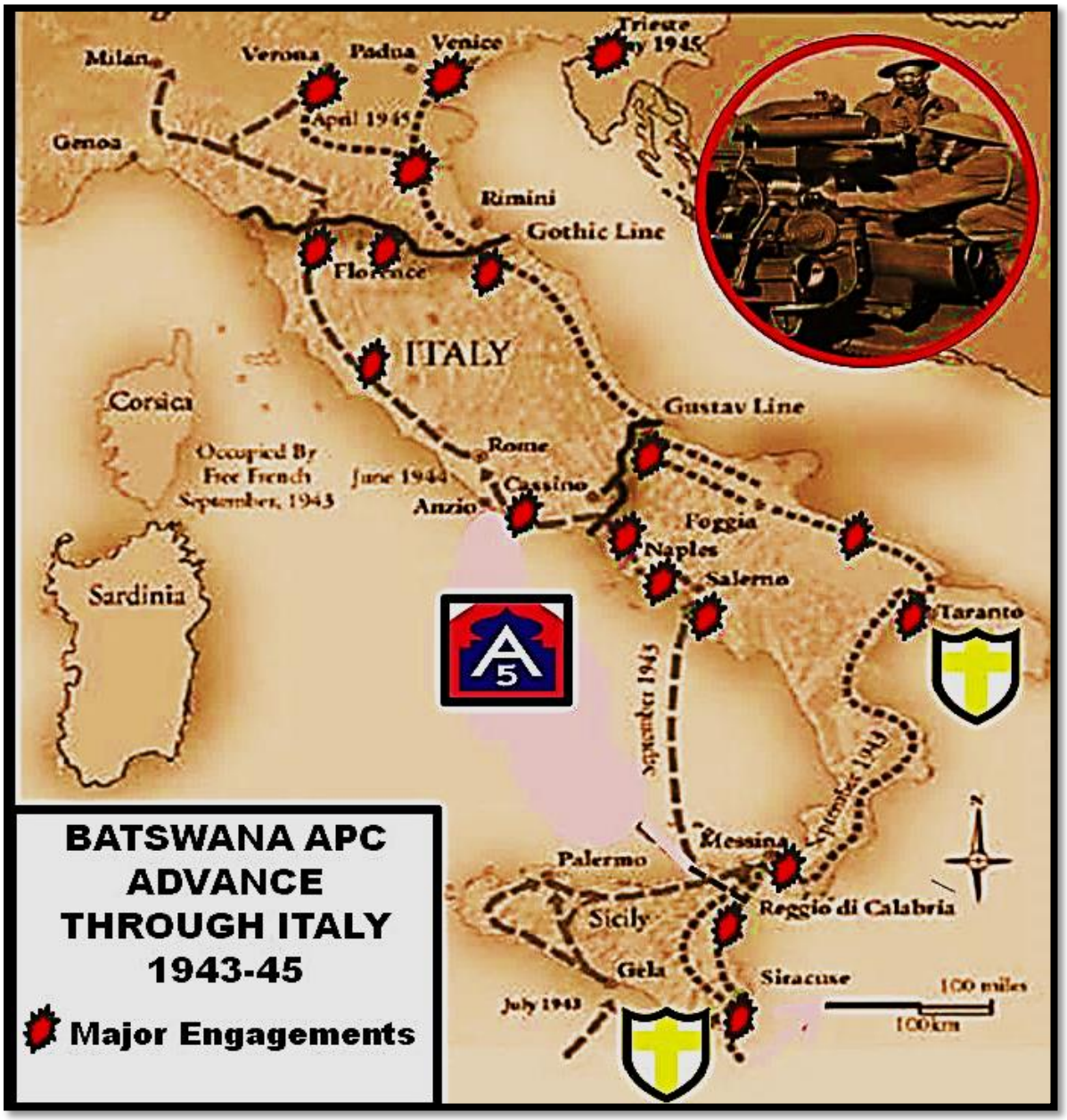
The arrival of the Brazilian 1st Division and US 10th Mountain Division at the end of 1944, as well as increased activity by anti-German Italian partisans, helped turn the tide of battle. In February-March 1945 the Americans and Brazilians pushed through the centre of the Gothic Line, while to the east the battle hardened 1972 (Bangwato), later joined by 1974 (Bakgatla, Balete, Batlokwa), Company assisted the Americans in pounding German coastal positions near Pisa.

Further inland 1976 (Bangwato) Company helped provide cover for the New Zealanders, Poles, Americans, Indians, and allied Italians of the 5th Army's right flank.

In April 22-23, 1945 Batswana were among the multinational forces that crossed the river Po to rapidly advance across northern Italy. Sweeping across the northern Italian plains, while taking the city of Venice. The rapid rapid advance resulted in a final German surrender in Italy on April 29, 1945.

By the end of the fighting Batswana were among those who had reached the Austrian and Yugoslav borders. Elsewhere, many Batswana and Basotho pioneers helped restore the port of Venice, allowing food and supplies to reach the vanquished enemy as well as victorious allies.





Atkinson Report

With the end of the war the white officers who commanded various colonial African troops in the allied armies recognized that “native affairs” would not return to its pre-war pattern. In August 1945, the Officer Commanding the 1974 (Bakgatla, Balete, Batlokwa) HAA Company, G.J.L. Atkinson, thus informed the Protectorate's Government Secretary, Gerald Nettleton, that there had been no instances of mass disobedience among the Batswana gunners, however adding:

"But elsewhere there was a lot. It is one of the most important aspects of the behaviour of African troops in this war. The Depot Commandant had a very interesting talk on this subject, and asked the OCs [Officers Commanding] for their views on how things might be improved- for the next time! He says that mass

disobedience occurred among all African troops. It is not being hushed up now- it cannot be- and indeed it is the most important fact to be faced. Successful African mass disobedience is a product of this war."

Back in Botswana the young men who spearheaded the post-war resistance of the BakaNswazwi, as well as many of those who in June 1949 proclaimed Seretse as their true Kgosi, whore their APC uniforms. Elsewhere such dikgosi as Kgari and Bathoen II recognized a new spirit of assertiveness among the veterans.

Yet only a few former APC/HCTC soldiers, NCOs Philip Matante, Kenneth Nkhwa and Amos Dambe being notable examples, ultimately played leading roles in the subsequent emergence of the nationalist political parties. Most of the leading nationalist politicians of the 1960s, individuals such as Mpho, Masire, Nwako and Koma, as well as Seretse, were in school during the war years. Batswana troops came back with new skills that, due to the lack of opportunity at home and racist job reservation across the borders, proved to be of little subsequent benefit to them. The same is true of those blacks who rose to more skilled occupations in Gauteng's war industries only to be pushed back down the ladder with peace. Local Batswana participated in the great, brutally suppressed, strikes of 1945-46.

Then there is the most overlooked of all local veterans, the women who maintained the nation, nurturing its post-independence leadership. In Molepolole, when their men folk returned in 1946, they sang a song which roughly translates: "Hail Kgosi Kgari, our men have come home through the grace of God, Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bangwato, we are one nation!"

At the Victory Parade in Molepolole women sang: ***"Hail Kgosi Kgari, Our men have come home through the grace of God, Bakwena, Bangwaketse, Bangwato, we are one nation!"***

War veterans Kgosi Kgari Sechele II and Dr. A.M. Merriweather at the Molepolole Victory Parade in 1946

Black Power in World War II

Thanks to the British High Commission, three Batswana veterans Peter Moeti, Kind Sechele and Peter Masole- will be traveling to London [September 1995] to take part in the end of war celebrations. Hopefully their attendance will help to remind the rest of the world that the final victory over the Axis was made possible by the blood, sweat and tears of blacks.

Judging from most of the war related magazines, books, TV shows etc. produced this past year there is still little recognition of the extent of Africa's contribution. At least 1,650,000 Africans served in various militaries. The 10,000 Batswana in the British Army were part of a total continental contingent of some 400,000. Another 320,000 black Africans served in the South African Union Defence Force. Approximately 250,000 served in French, 150,000 in Italians and 200,000 in Anglo-Egyptian forces, while 30,000 fought in Haile Selassie's Free Ethiopian Army with an equal number in Belgium Congolese contingents.

Major theatres of operation for African units included the Horn of Africa (1940-41), North Africa and Malta (1939-46), Middle East (1941-46), Madagascar (1942), Burma (1941-46) France (1939-40, 44-45) and Italy (1943-45). In

addition, over a million other Africans served in technically civilian labour units assigned to war related projects in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Much data about these units remains obscure. What is available suggests that the average casualty rate in African contingents was between 5-10%. In this context the Batswana were relatively fortunate to have suffered only 210 deaths during the hostilities. The Basotho contingent that was slightly less than twice the size of the Batswana suffered a rate five times greater.

Until recently the whitewashing of World War Two also extended to African-Americans and other blacks. Over 1,000,000 served in all black units in the then segregated U.S. armed forces. Another 100,000 or so black West Indians served in British and French forces. Prominent among these was the Guyanese Felix Emboue, who established the Free French Government in Chad in 1940, the first territory to liberated from the authority of the Vichy regime. He subsequently led the Free French administration in Equatorial Africa and organized the 1944 Brazzaville Conference, which called for the democratization of the French Empire. For its part in 1944 Britain finally began to extend universal suffrage to its colonies in the West Indies giving most blacks the vote for the first time. Over 50,000 Brazilians also fought against the Germans in Italy, many of whom had African ancestry. Smaller numbers of blacks from such other countries as Cuba and Panama also participated.

On the other side, in accordance with Hitler's doctrine of racial purification, up to a thousand Afro-Germans were put to death by the Nazi regime 1933-45. Some African prisoners of war were also used as objects of Nazi racial research.

H.C.
At least 210 Batswana APC lost their lives during the war, while another 560 casualties qualified for disability pensions. By contrast 1216 Basotho and 122 Swazi APC members died in military service.
1939
1945

The Forgotten War – Batswana in The Middle East 1945-48

When Batswana enlisted in the African Pioneer Corps from 1941, they were assured by both their Dikgosi and British officials that their tour of duty would last until the final defeat of Hitler's Reich. Thus, in the aftermath of the 8th May 1945 unconditional surrender of Germany most of the "Fighting Becs" expected that they would soon be able to finally return to their country and loved ones.

For their part the British had also initially timetabled the return of all of the High Commission Territories Pioneer units (APC), i.e., Basotho and Amaswati as well as Batswana, by September of 1945. Yet by the end of the month only 14% of the force had actually been repatriated.

As it was, the last of the Batswana companies recruited for the war only departed from Egypt in March of 1946, arriving at Clairwood Camp in Durban the following month. There they were finally discharged with each being given a new suit, their accumulated back pay and an additional £10 to cover transport home.

The reason for the delay in the APC's demobilisation was twofold.

On the one hand in the aftermath of the war there was a genuine shortage of shipping to cater for the return of British Empire servicemen. This situation was further aggravated by the fact that the Japanese only agreed to finally surrender three months after the fall of Germany, in the wake of the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, as well as the imminent prospect of a joint US-Soviet invasion of their home islands.

In the above context, the APC was ultimately given lower priority than the return or redeployment of service men from other areas. While the preference given to some, such as liberated POWS from East Asia, can be seen as having been routinely reasonable, it is also true that white units, as well as units whose post-war loyalty was more suspect than the APC were placed ahead of the queue by the British War Office (WO).

There was, however, an additional motive for the delay. With the drawdown of Indian, South African and Australia-New Zealand (Anzac) forces from the region, Britain's Middle East Command (MEC) found the continued presence of the APC units to be useful for upholding their authority in Egypt and the adjacent territory of Palestine, where imperial interests were coming under increasing challenge.

Thus, it was that although by August 1945 all of the APC companies had been withdrawn from Italy and elsewhere, most remained stationed for another seven

months in these two territories, in the face of growing post-war resistance to continued British occupation. Their final withdrawal, moreover, nearly coincided with the arrival of 3,600 fresh troops of the APC's rebranded successor force - the High Commission Territories Corps.

Although recognized as an independent kingdom in 1922, Egypt had remained under defacto British occupation, which up until 1952 was exercised through a royal puppet regime. Nationalist resentment in the country had been aggravated by the virtual British military takeover during the war, which had effectively shattered all pretence of Egyptian sovereignty.

Although most of the British, including Batswana, forces were confined to the Suez Canal Zone in 1947, their continued presence in the country was still resented. Like other imperial forces, the Batswana troops thus experienced mutual hostility from the local Arabic speaking population. As one Motswana veteran, S.G Masimega, noted:

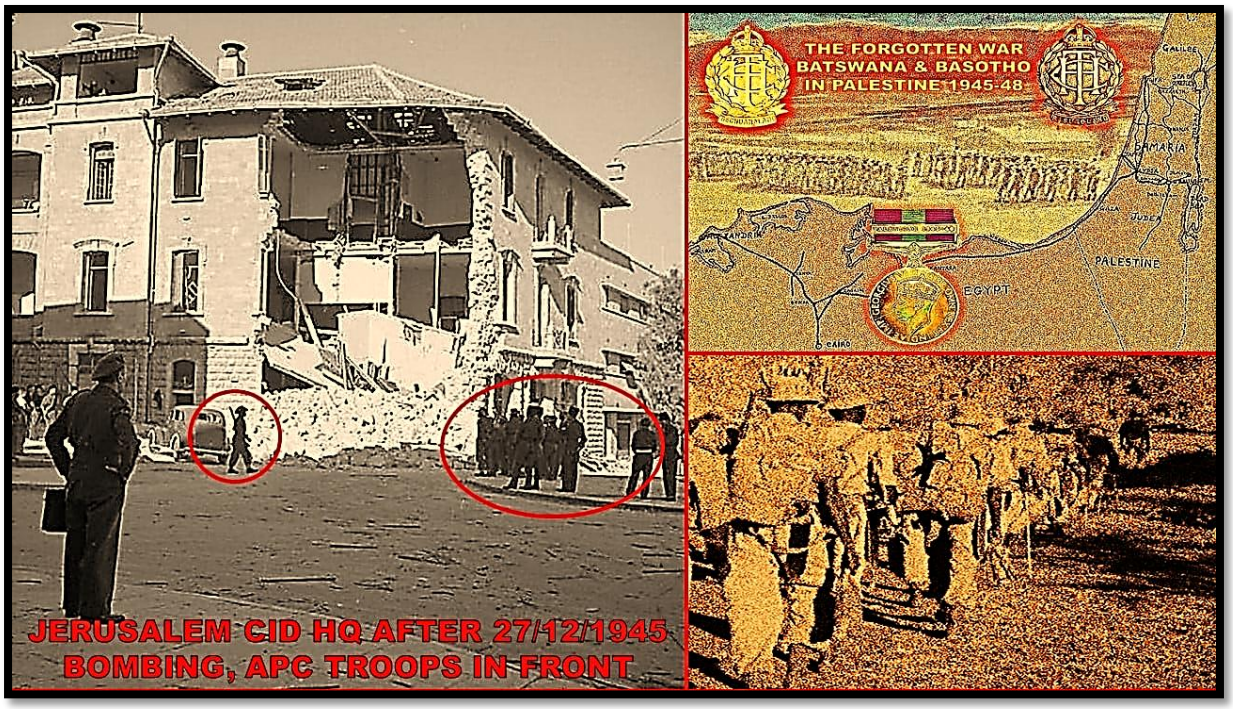
"Arabs were a peculiar people I can't understand. They saw Africans as very queer, pro-British, and some of them would often speak to the African soldiers to tell them that the Batswana take the British to be their gods...Arab's regard Africans as a minor people under the British; the called us 'British dogs'"

In Palestine the situation was much more tense with both Zionist (Jewish) and Palestinian guerrillas fighting the British, as well as each other, in the run up to the full scale 1948-49 war that would ultimately give birth to the State of Israel, along with the uprooting of much of the Palestinian Arab population that is the foundation of today's Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

From late 1945 many Batswana and Basotho companies that had been battle hardened in Italy were thus deployed in Palestine over their protests. Most were stationed either at Esdraelon, near the biblical town of Nazareth, or in Jerusalem. As part of the British occupation, they were targeted by Zionist and Arabs insurgents alike, although the former claimed more APC casualties. As another veteran, Julius Segano, observed:

"(Our) coming home was delayed because of Palestine and the Arabs. So now is another experience, guerrilla warfare. We used not to carry guns when going into villages, but there in Palestine we had to."

In December 1945 resentment among Basotho APC troops boiled over into a full-scale mutiny after four of their comrades were killed in a Zionist (Irgun) bombing of a Jerusalem police station. The mutiny was ultimately put down by force, during which three Basotho were killed and a dozen more wounded.



The High Commission Territories Corps

That none of the Batswana APC companies joined in the action may in part be attributed to their attachment to their chain of command, which was rooted in their traditional regiments or mephato as well as their formal military rankings. In this respect, many of the Sergeant Majors (RSMs), the highest NCO rank then open to Batswana, were senior royal relatives. British dispatches, in this respect, notably credit RSMs Rasebolai Kgamane, Molwa Sekgoma and Mookami Gaseitsiwe for maintaining loyalty among the troops at the time.

The ranks of the APC RSMs had also included Dikgosi Kgari Sechele of the Bakwena and Molefi of the Bakgatla baga Kgafela. Both had, however, been among those who had been repatriated early.

Notwithstanding their nonparticipation in the mutiny, there were those among the Batswana who had advocated taking up violent measures, as reflected in the following communication:

"The Makgoa will realize that we mean what we say about the promise to send us home be kept. Officers will know soon as a few of them are stoned or stabbed (as the Basotho have done before and will do again) active steps will then be taken to begin to repatriate these men."

In the aftermath of the mutiny the British War Office recognized that the repatriation of the APC units could not be delayed indefinitely. As an investigative dossier concluded:

"These reports of Basuto and Bechuana Companies in Palestine make rather dismal reading. The reason for their attitude is only too clear and it is unfortunate that they should have got the idea that they are being exploited because they are Africans. But facts were unmistakable; seven months after the war against Hitler had ended, these men were still in the army and still in the danger zone."

Yet despite the widespread resentment among the veteran APC Companies, their military contribution to the British position in Palestine was judged to have been of value. It was therefore decided to raise fresh troops from among the three High Commission Territories for a new post-war military force to be known as the High Commission Territories Corps (HCTC).

HCTC recruitment thus began in the early months of 1946 with 3,600 signing up for two and a half years of service. The Corps deployment in Palestine began in May 1946 and lasted until almost the end of the British mandate in May 1948.

For nearly two years the Corps thus performed guard and logistical duties during the period when what had been primarily an insurgency by militant Zionist groups spiralled into a full-scale civil war between the Arab and Jewish population with the Batswana and other British Empire forces often caught in the crossfire.

To a greater extent than the APC before it, the HCTC companies were tribally and ethnically mixed, which gave rise to at least some tension within their ranks; as one veteran, Rex Sechele, recalled:

"My company had people from all over Botswana – Bakgatla, Bangwato, Bakwena, Bakalaka. Even though we were in one Company there was tribal discrimination. All the other tribes were one but the Kalanga tribe was discriminated against. There were some instances where some of the Kalanga went on strike because they were ill-treated by other tribes. All the [Non-Commissioned] officers were from other tribes and there was no officer from the Kalanga area."

As it was, several Bakalanga were promoted as NCOs, notably including the future political leader Sergeant Major Amos Dambe.

By early 1947 the British presence in Palestine was understood to be transitional, pending a determination of the territory's future in the context of the conflict

between its Arab and Jewish populations. In May 1947 this task fell to the multi-national United Nations Special Committee on Palestine or UNSCOP.

In the above context the role of the HCTC in the region, unlike the APC before it, evolved into more of an international peacekeeping mission than a defence of imperial interests. While the UN mission itself may be judged to have been a failure as it was ultimately unable to prevent the outbreak of the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War, the HCTC carried out its assignments with distinction.

From the beginning, however, there was strong opposition to the formation of the HCTC itself, as well as its overseas deployment. For the most part, the Bechuanaland colonial administration took a paternalistic concern about what might be the long-term effects of maintaining large numbers of Batswana in areas of external conflict.

It is entirely possible, however, the HCTC would have survived as a permanent force following the British withdrawal from Palestine had it not been for the vigorous opposition of the neighbouring settler regime of the Union of South Africa, whose politicians were increasingly concerned about the prospect of having “armed natives massing on its borders”.

As a result, in 1948 it was decided to disband HCTC, meaning that, unlike many other African territories at independence, Botswana did not have a colonial military formation to serve as the nucleus of a national army.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Bent, Alan *Ten Thousand Men of Africa: The Story of the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners, 1941-1946* London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, for Bechuanaland Government, 1952. 128pp.

Bhila, Hoyini H. K. 'The impact of the Second World War on peasant agriculture in Botswana, 1939-1956' *Botswana Notes and Records*, vol.16, 1964, pp.63-71

Jackson, Ashley. 'Tshekedi Khama, Leetile Raditladi and the Second World War' *Lekgapho* Serowe: Khama III Memorial Museum, 1995

Jackson, Ashley. 'Tswana war poetry: part one' *Botswana Notes and Records*, vol.27, 1995, pp.97-110

Jackson, Ashley. 'Bad chiefs and sub-tribes: aspects of recruitment for the British Army in Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1941-42' *Botswana Notes and Records,* vol.28, 1996, pp.87-96

Jackson, Ashley, 'Motivation and mobilization for war: recruitment for the British Army in the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1941-42' *African Affairs*, vol.96, no.384, 1997

Jackson, Ashley. 'VE Day 1995: perspectives and commemorations from Botswana' *Botswana Notes and Records*, vol.30, 1998, pp.87-100

Jackson, Ashley. *An African Country at War: Botswana 1939-1945* Oxford: Clarendon Press (Oxford Historical Monographs), 1999. 281pp.

Jackson, Ashley. *The British Empire and the Second World War* London: Hambledon/ Continuum, 2006.

Kiyaga-Mulindwa, David. 'Defence of empire or a political tactic? self-sacrifice in the Bechuanaland Protectorate during the Second World War' University of Botswana Department of History seminar paper, Gaborone, 1979.

Kiyaga-Mulindwa, David. 'Bechuanaland Protectorate and the Second World War' *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, vol.12, no.3 (May 1984), pp.33-53

Kiyaga-Mulindwa, David. 'The Protectorate and World War II', chap., pp. in Fred Morton & Jeff Ramsay, eds. *The Birth of Botswana: A History of the Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1910-66* Gaborone: Longman Botswana, 1987

Marumo, M. 'The socio-economic and political impact of the Second World War on the Bangwato' Gaborone: University of Botswana Department of History, BA research essay, 1989.

Mokopakgosi, Brian. 'The impact of the Second World War: the case of the Kweneng in the then Bechuanaland Protectorate, 1939-50' pp.160-181 in David Killingray & Richard Rathbone, eds. *Africa and the Second World War* Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1986

Parsons, Neil "Botswana (Bechuanaland Protectorate) and The Two World Wars" online resource available @ http://www.thuto.org/ubh/bw/ww/wwp1.htm
Ramsay, Jeff, with Kekwaletswe Modirwa, & Moeti, Mesh. *From Boys to Men: The Story of the BDF at 30, 1977-2007* Gaborone: Front Page Publications for Botswana Defence Force, 2007, pp.15-23: "On the footsteps of 10 000 great men".

Ramsay, Jeff "Batswana at War, 1939-46" Botswana Society Golden Jubilee Talk, available online @ https://www.academia.edu/94380747/BOTSWANA_SOCIETY_GOLDEN_JUBILEE_ILLUSTRATED_TALK_27_7_16_BATSWANA_AT_WAR_1939_46_BY_DR_JEFF_RAMSAY

Schapera, Isaac *Migrant Labour and Tribal Life: A Study of Conditions in the Bechuanaland Protectorate*, Oxford University Press, 1947, 248pp.

Schmitt, Deborah Ann. *The Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners* Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2006. 278pp [revised version of Ph.D. under previous surname Shackleton]

Shackleton, Debbie. "Recipe for failure: integration of Batswana soldiers into British units during the Second World War" African Studies Association annual meeting, Orlando, Florida, 1995

Shackleton, Deborah Ann. "Imperial military policy and the Bechuanaland Pioneers and Gunners during the Second World War" Indiana University: Ph.D. dissertation, 1996.

Shuckburgh, John. “War Narrative of the High Commission Territories and Official Colonial History of the War, 1939-1945' unpublished, in PRO DO 35/4180/Y4142/2, 56pp

Sobott, Gaele. ‘Experiences of Batswana women during the Second World War’ *Pula, Botswana Journal of African Studies*, vol.13, nos.1 & 2 (1999), pp.93-107.

Taylor, Mike. 'The Second World War and the Batswapong’ *Zebra’s Voice* (Gaborone: National Museum & Art Gallery), no.21, 1994, p.10

Zaffiro, James. *From Police Network to Station of the Nation: A Political History of Broadcasting in Botswana, 1927-1991* Gaborone: Botswana Society, 1991